VIZ Signature
PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT
Vagabond
Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue
Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa
vol. 25
English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 25

VIZ Signature Edition

Story & Art by
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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
VAGABOND is rated M for Mature and is recommended for mature readers. This volume contains graphic violence.

vol. 25

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SO...

YOU'RE GIVING ME TIME.

...YOU'RE GIVING ME A CHANCE...

...FOR ME AS WELL.

#216 | A Year After

JUST ONE YEAR...

THE SAME YEAR'S TIME WENT BY FOR BOTH OF US.

IT WAS JUST ONE YEAR AGO THAT I ADMIRED YOU AS AN OPPONENT, BUT NOW THAT SEEMS LIKE THE DISTANT PAST.

DENSHICHIRŌ...

YES, THAT WAS THEN...

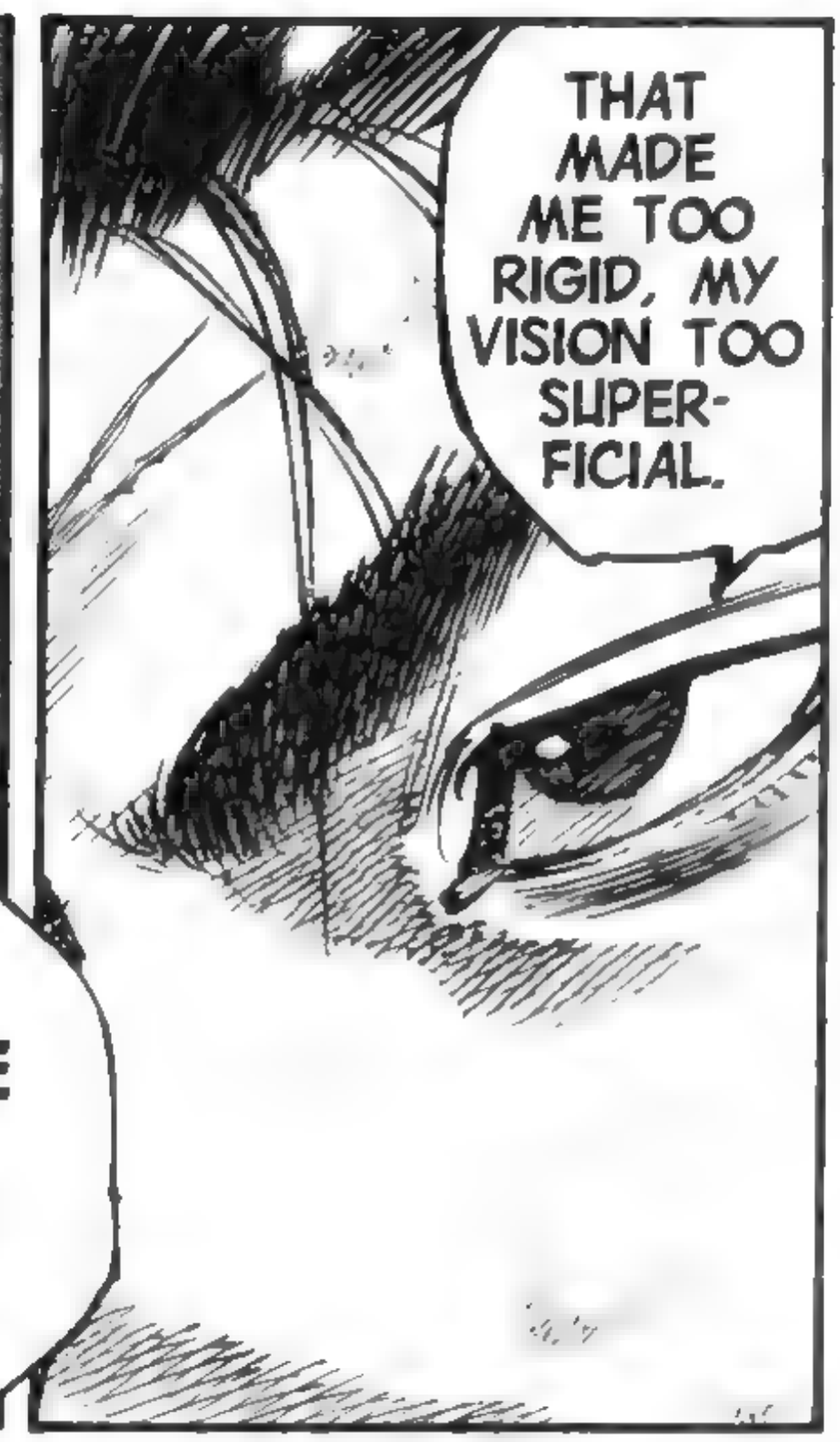
LOOKING BACK...

A YEAR AGO I WAS A COUNTRY BUMPKIN.

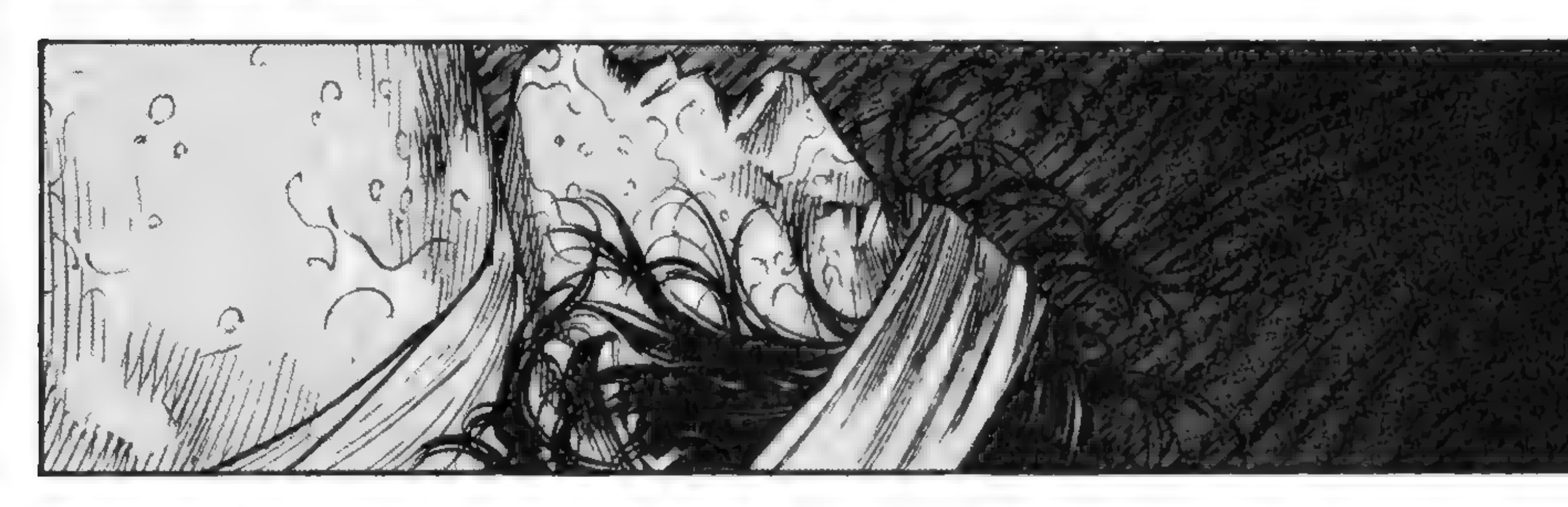
TAKING ON THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL WAS PERFECT.

I WAS HUNGRY-- TOO MUCH SO.

I HAD NOTHING TO FEAR, NOTHING TO LOSE, AND I WAS EAGER TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING.



FOR THREE DAYS, I WAS ON THE VERGE OF DEATH.



LET'S CALL THIS OFF...

WELL, DENSHI-CHIRŌ?

YOU CAN'T CUT ME FROM THERE.

YAAAAAH!!

WHY CRY OUT LIKE THAT?
TO *ACT* MORE LIKE A SWORDS-MAN?

ZWM
ZWM

HMF

ZWM
ZWM

ZWM

HIS SWORD...
HE'S TOO RIGID.

SO WHAT! HE CAN SWING AGAIN.

HE MISSED.

DENSCHI-CHIRŌ'S DOMINATING!

YOU HAVE THE CORRECT FORM...

WHAT'S THE INTENT BEHIND YOUR SWORD?

BUT IT'S A SWORD THAT PURPORTS TO BE PROPER SWORDS-MANSHIP.

HE CAN'T REACH ME...

FWOOSH

IT WON'T MEET ITS MARK.

!

IT DOESN'T CALL OUT TO ME.

MUST STAY OUT OF HIS REACH...

HUFF

DID HE GET HIM!?

NO.

BUT HE WAS CLOSE.

THAT'S *MY* STRATEGY!

...WHILE STILL KEEPING HIM WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF *MY* RANGE.

THE SNOW SURE IS COMING DOWN...

IS THERE ALWAYS THIS MUCH SNOW?

THE WINTERS IN KYOTO...

CAN'T YOU HEAR IT, DENSHICHIRŌ?

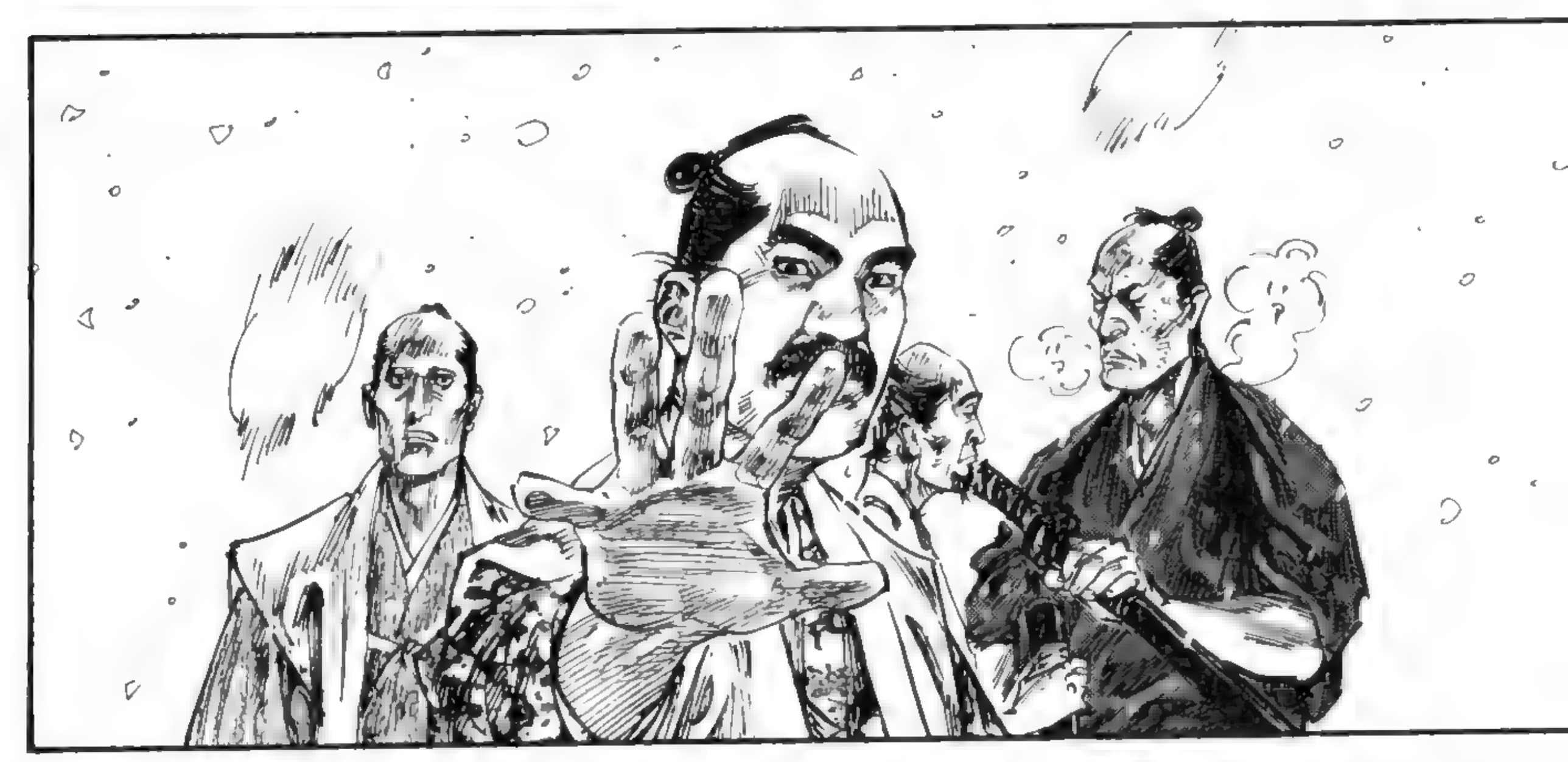
YAHAH!

...AND YOU CAN CUT ANY-THING.
THE VOICE OF YOUR SWORD.
WAIT.
WAIT...
SORRY ABOUT THIS...
WIELD ME IN THE PROPER MANNER...

KLANG

FICH
WHY NOT END IT NOW?

FICH
FICH
WAIT!
HOLD ON, HOLD ON!



YOU'RE DOMI-NATING!

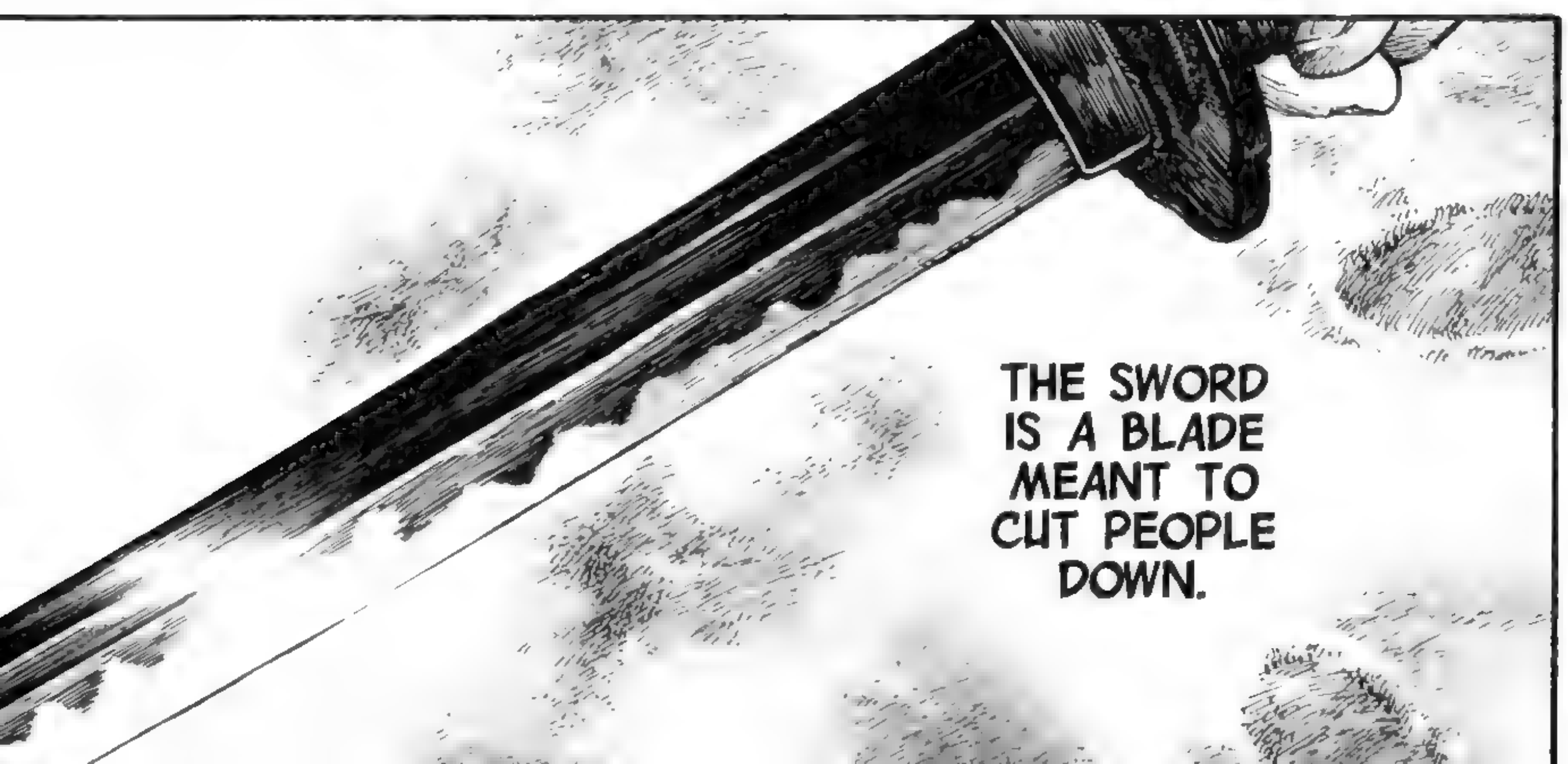
YOU CAN WIN!

!?

RUN AWAY IF YOU LIKE...

.....

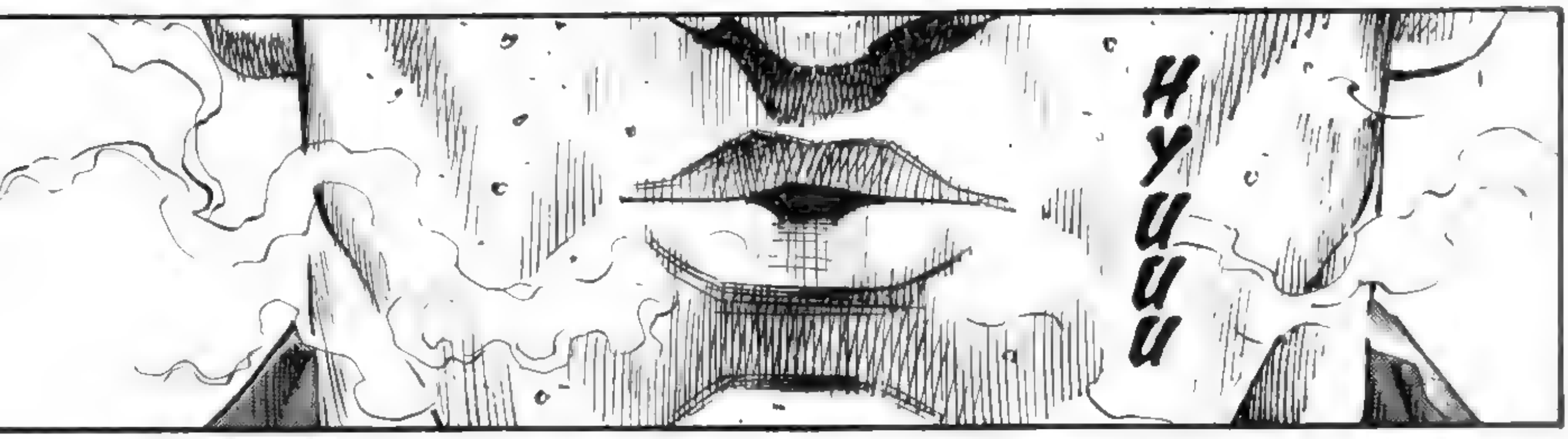
IT'S JUST A SILLY FIGHT.


THE SWORD IS A BLADE MEANT TO CUT PEOPLE DOWN.

A SWORD CAN NEVER STOP BEING WHAT IT IS.

YES...

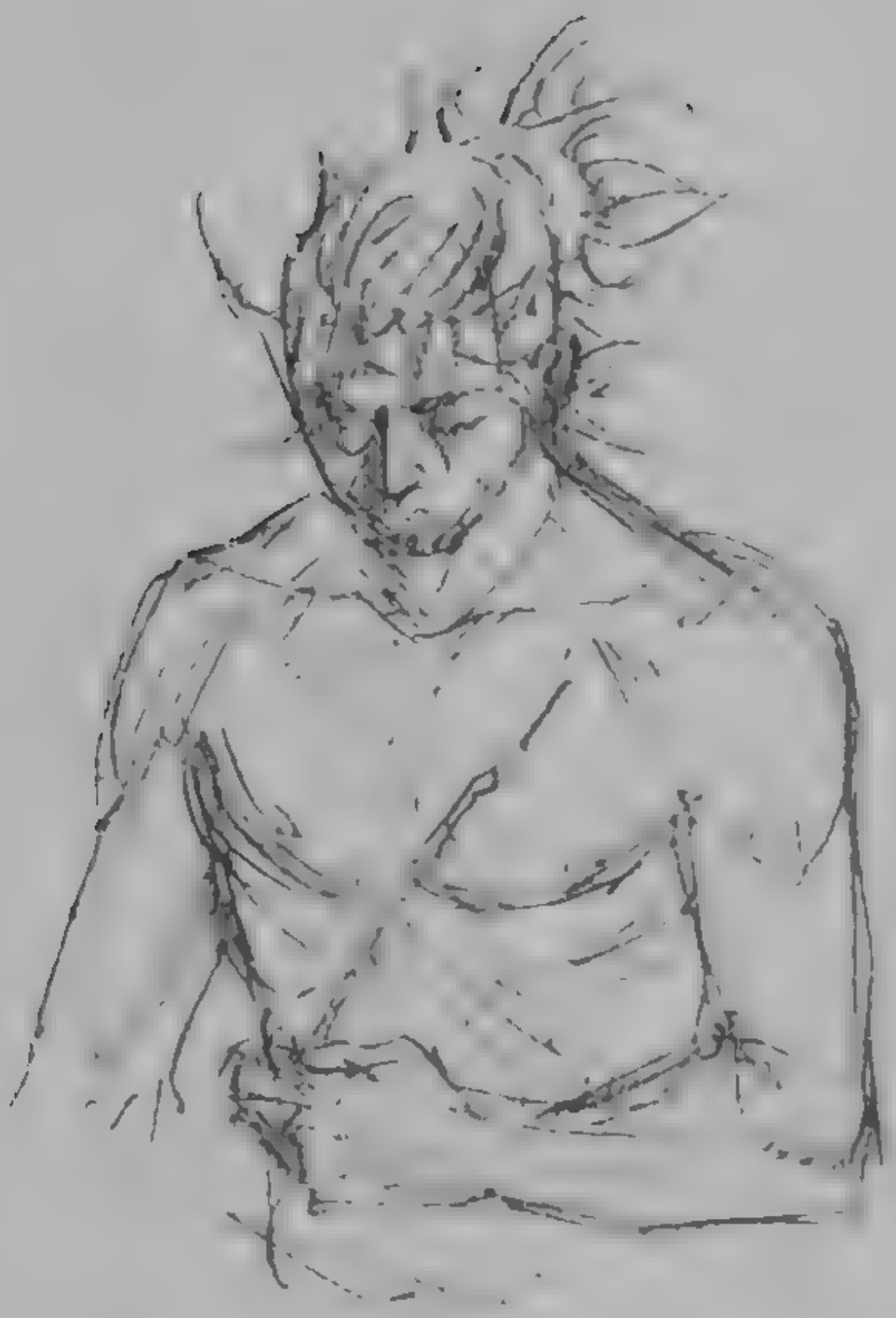
HMM...


HYUUU

PERHAPS I WAS ASKING FOR TOO MUCH.
I WANTED TO WIN THIS BATTLE AND MOVE PAST IT.

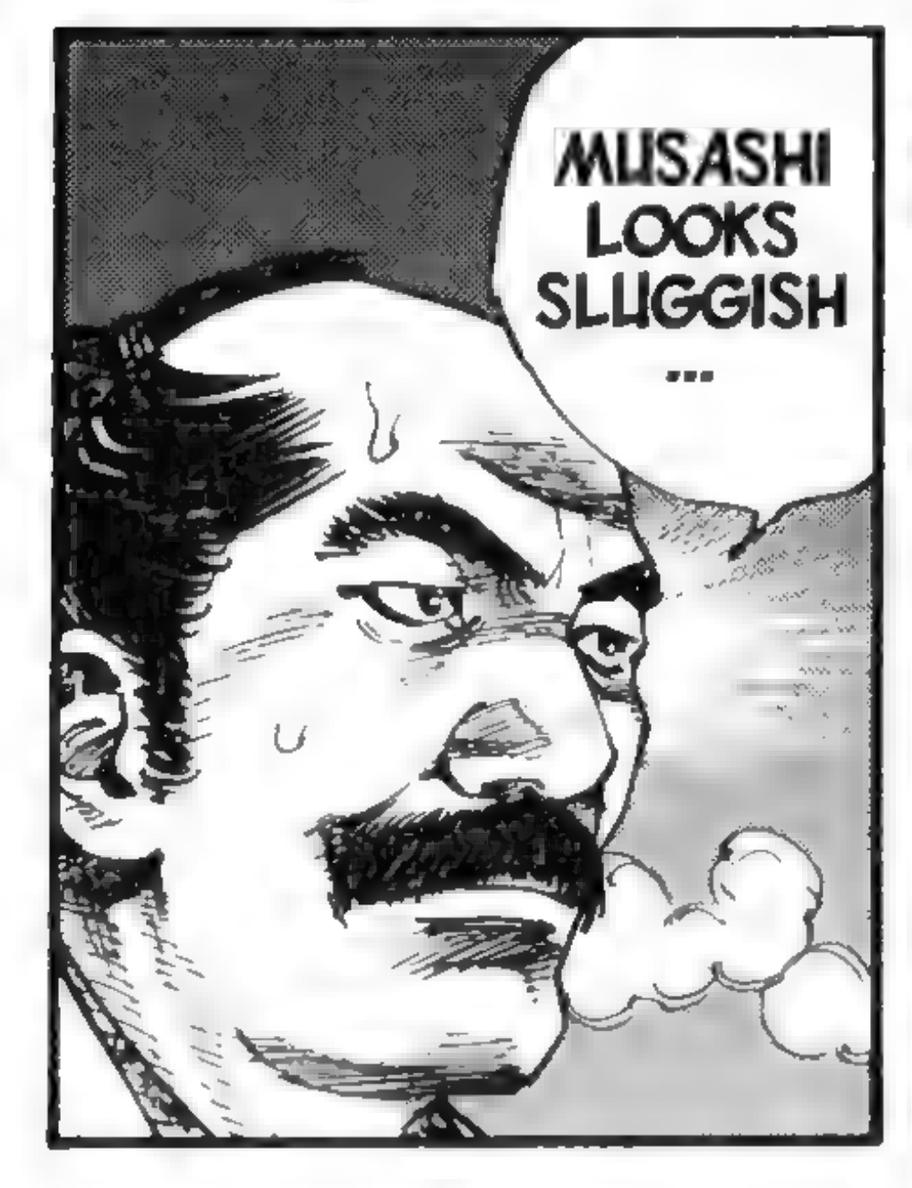
I MUST FORGET ABOUT LOOKING BEYOND THIS FIGHT.

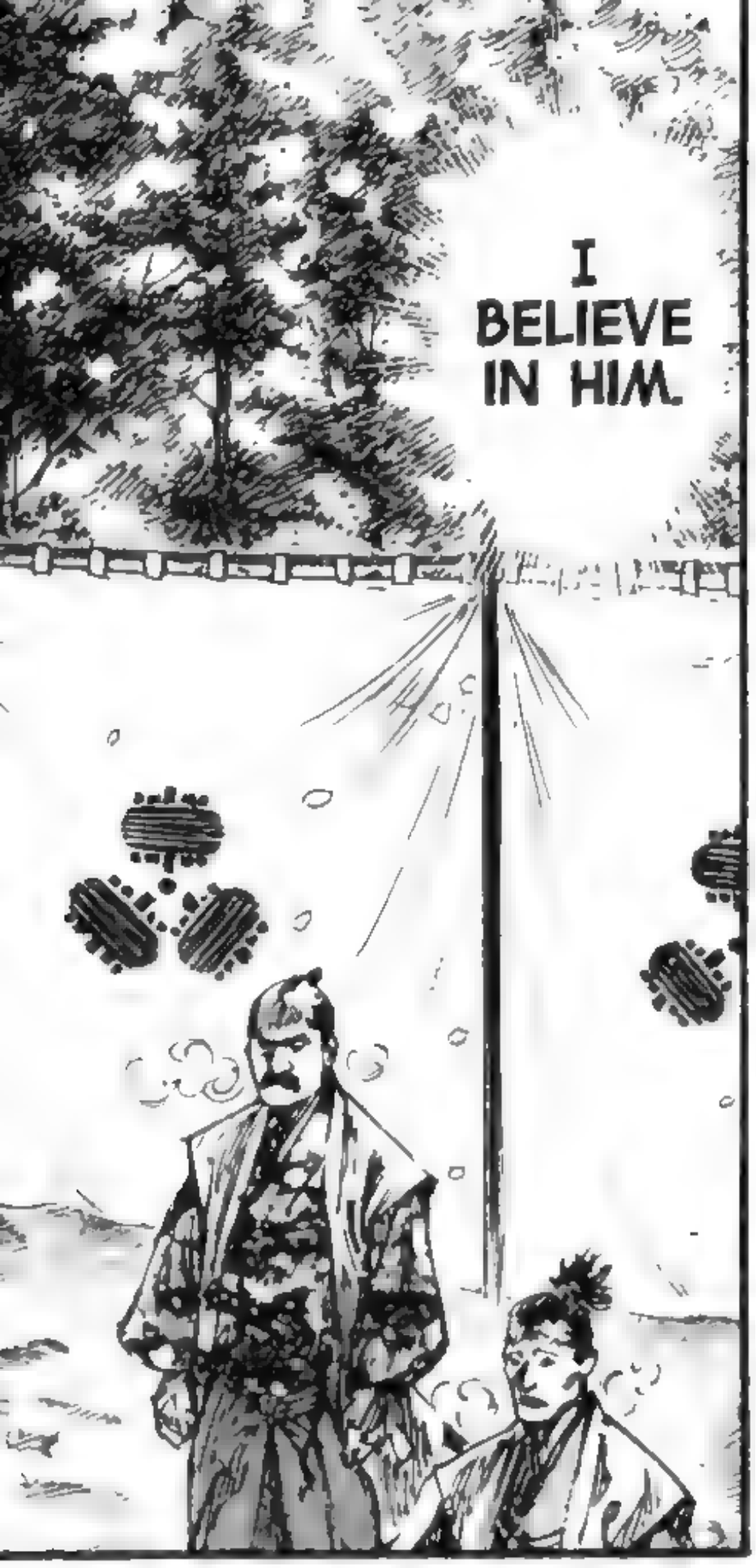
Vagabond



#217 Denshichirō Advances

FORGET ABOUT EVERY-THING ELSE!




I BELIEVE IN HIM.

I MUST BELIEVE IN HIM...
I HAVE TO.

I'M ASHAMED TO SAY IT...
...BUT I CAN'T STOP SHAKING.

I MUST BELIEVE IN OUR MASTER DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI.

FICH

FICH

MOVE INTO HIS RANGE...

FICH

...!

FOR-WARD ...

FICH

BUT...

I CAME HERE TO WIN.

...I'M STARTING TO REALIZE THAT IT MAY NOT HAPPEN...

GRIP

IT'S SO EXASPER-ATING!

YOU'RE WAY BEYOND ME NOW...!

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US HAS GROWN INSUR-MOUNTABLE!

FICH

FORWARD!

THERE'S NOTHING BEYOND THIS MOMENT.

I DON'T EVEN HOPE...

...TO WIN.

MUSASHI...

FROM NOW ON, MY AIM...

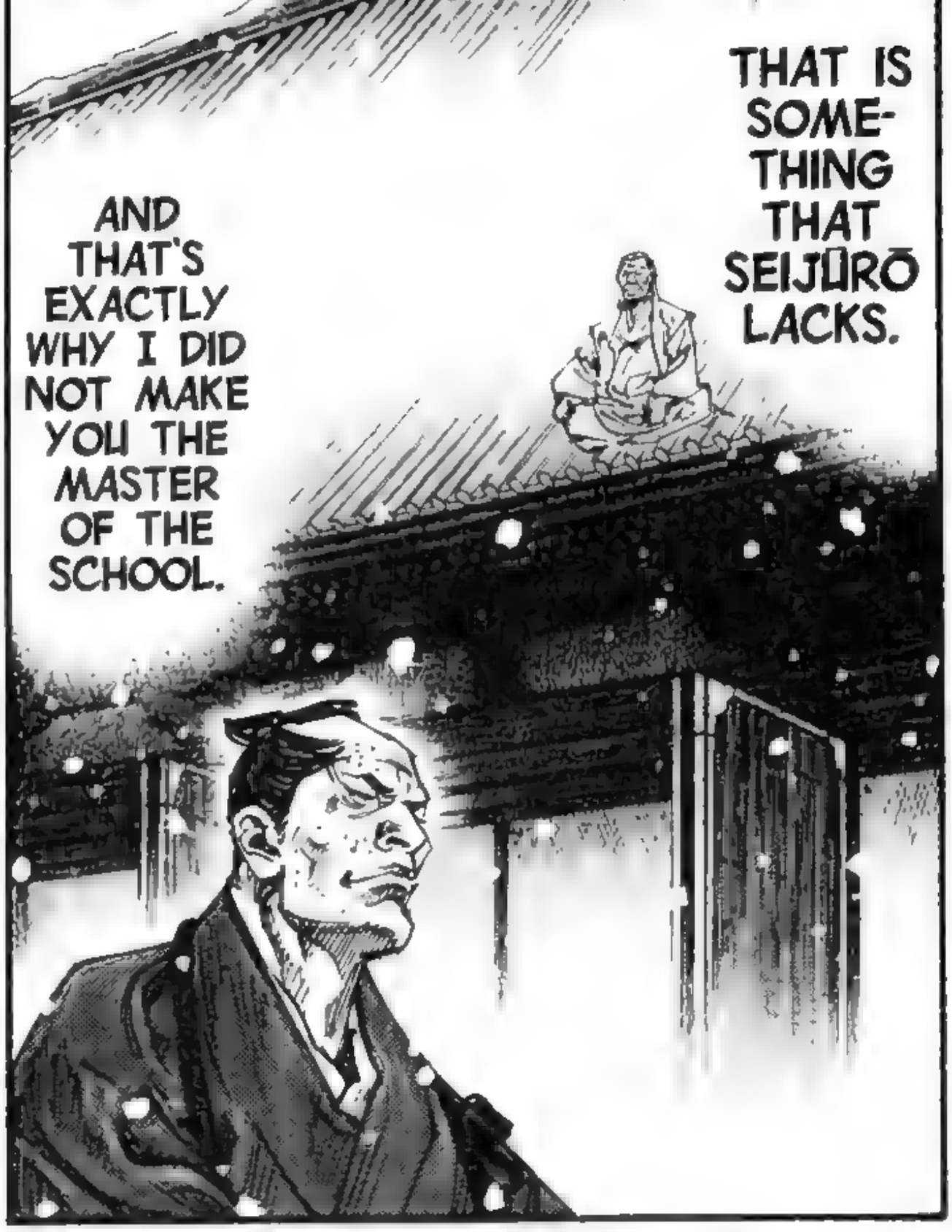
...HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WINNING.

AND IF THAT COSTS ME MY OWN LIFE, THEN SO BE IT.

HAH! YOU LACK GRACE, SO CLUMSY ...

...

BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS REMAINED TRUE TO YOURSELF... AND THAT SUITS YOU JUST FINE.


AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I DID NOT MAKE YOU THE MASTER OF THE SCHOOL.
THAT IS SOME-THING THAT SEIJŪRŌ LACKS.

HOWEVER, ALL THE DISCIPLES OF THE SCHOOL ARE QUITE FOND OF YOU BECAUSE OF IT.

I'M QUITE FOND OF IT TOO.
YOUR CLUMSY LACK OF GRACE...

I'LL ALWAYS BE WATCHING OVER YOU, DENSHICHIRŌ ...

MOVE FORWARD...

WITHIN HIS REACH...

FICH

FORWARD ...

FICH

HE'S IN MUSASHI'S RANGE...!

I AM YOSHIOKA DENSHI-CHIRŌ...

...THE SON OF YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ.

IN THE PAST, I USED MY FATHER'S NAME TO INTIMIDATE OTHERS.

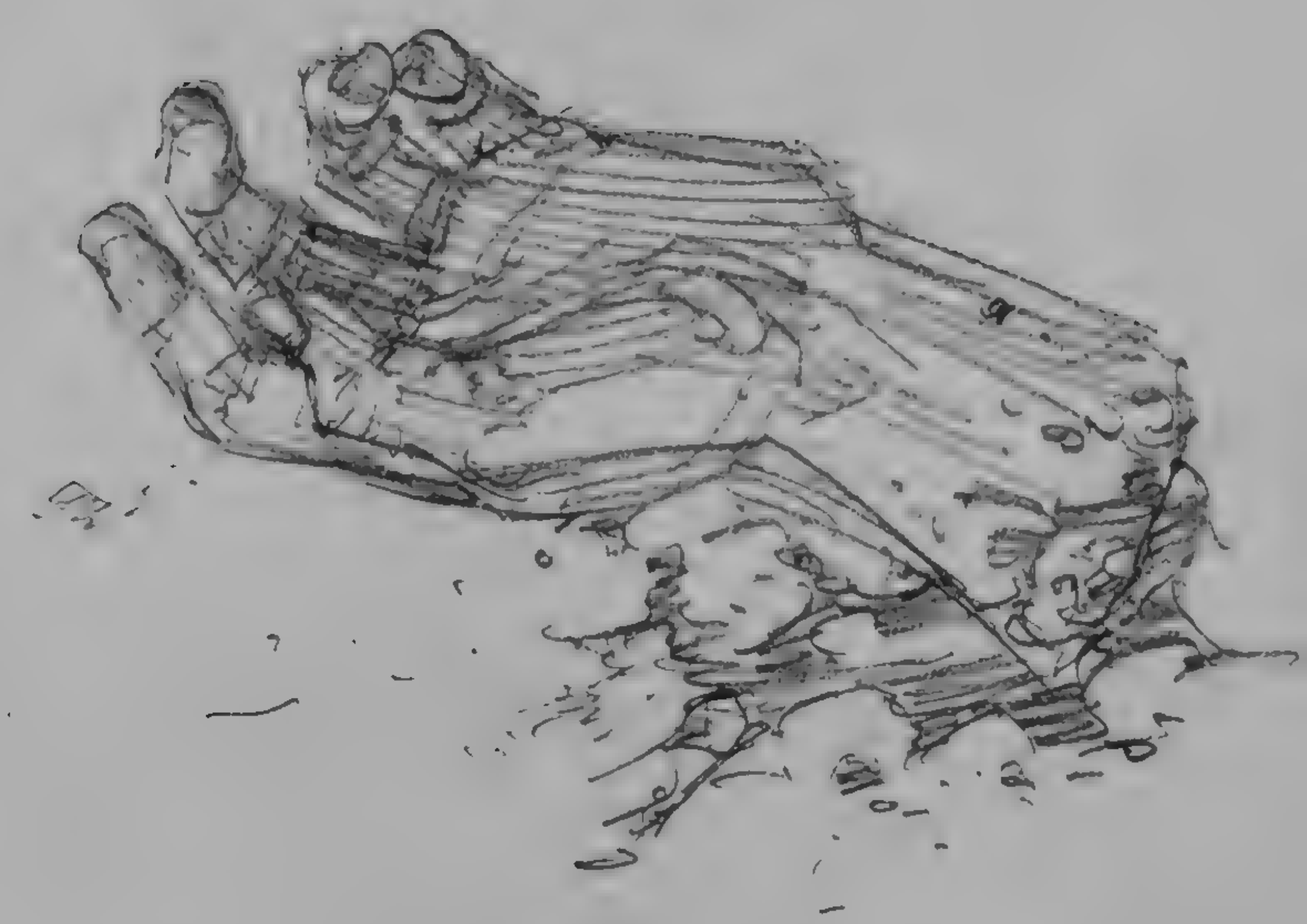
I FIGHT NOW TO PRESERVE HIS HONOR.

FORWARD...

TAMPAK
...

THD
...

Vagabond



BUT SHE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO WATCH...

ŌTSU WAS THERE...

FROM BEGINNING TO END...

#218 | Demise

WHUD
GRNCH

I GOT YOU!

NGHH!

!?

...

FWP

SHLAP

FWMP

DEN...

MUSASHI...

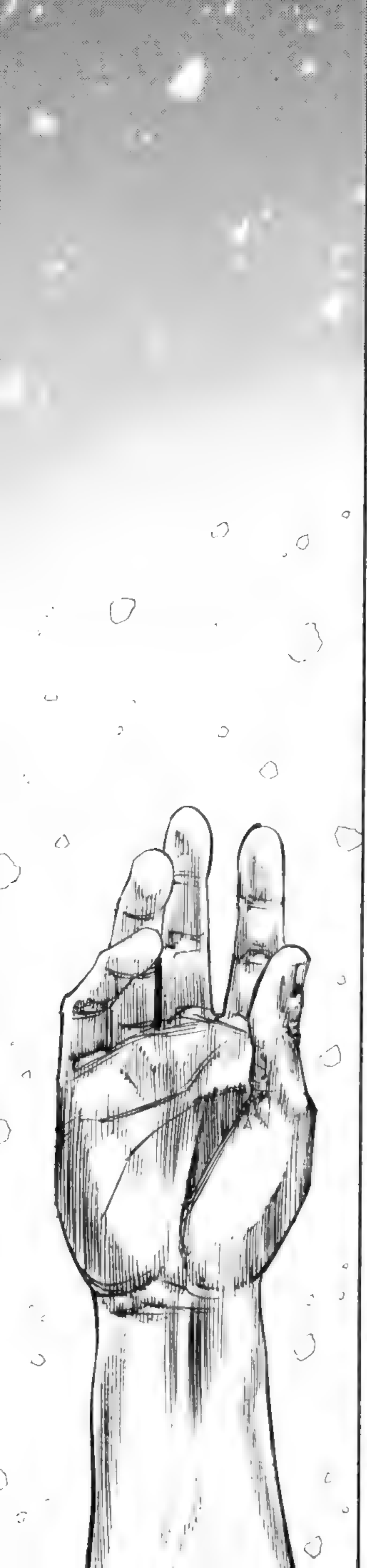
OH, MY...

AMAZ-
ING...

HOW FAR
YOU'VE
COME IN
JUST ONE
YEAR...

FICH

GO DOWN ALREADY.
COME ON.
I WON, RIGHT...?



FATHER...

YOU'VE ALWAYS REMAINED TRUE TO YOURSELF...

DENSHICHIRŌ...

KTNK

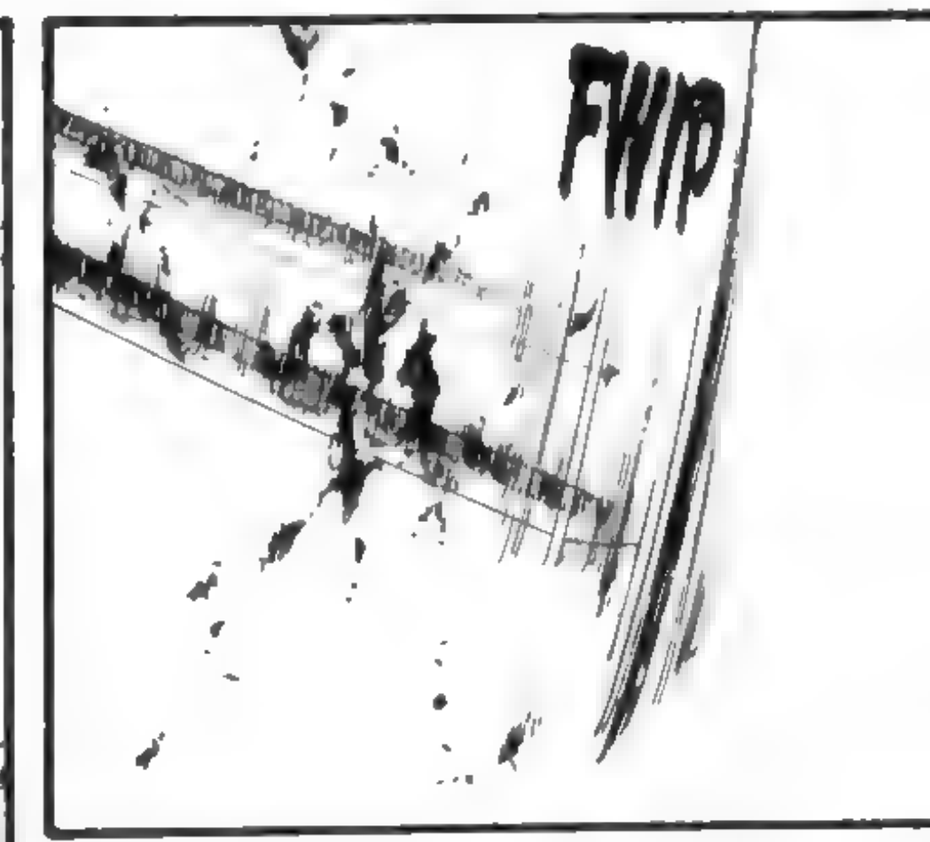
...

TSK.

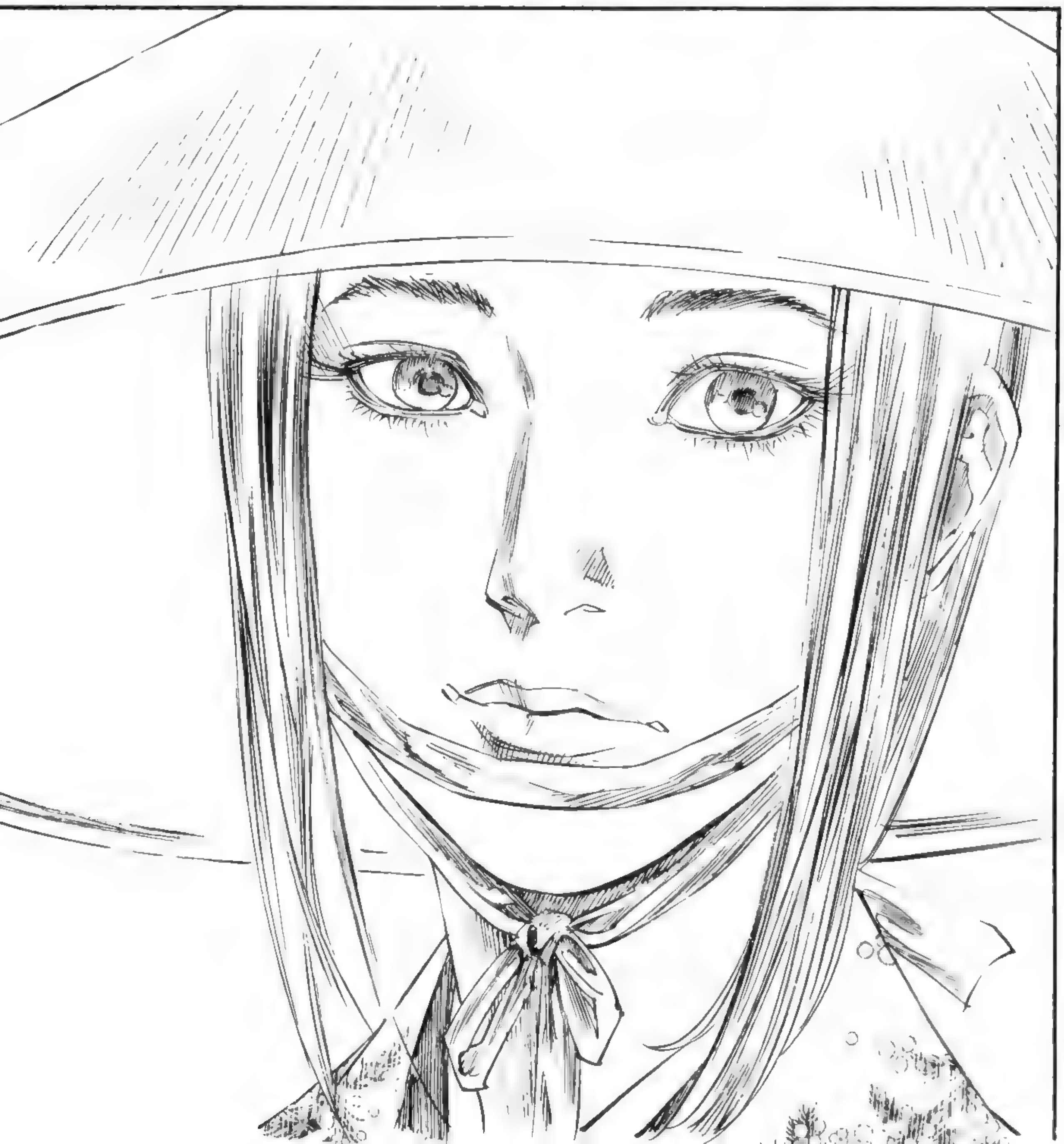
FICH
FICH

OUT OF MY WAY.
LET ME THROUGH.
SHOW CONSIDER-ATION FOR THE ELDERLY.

FICH
FICH

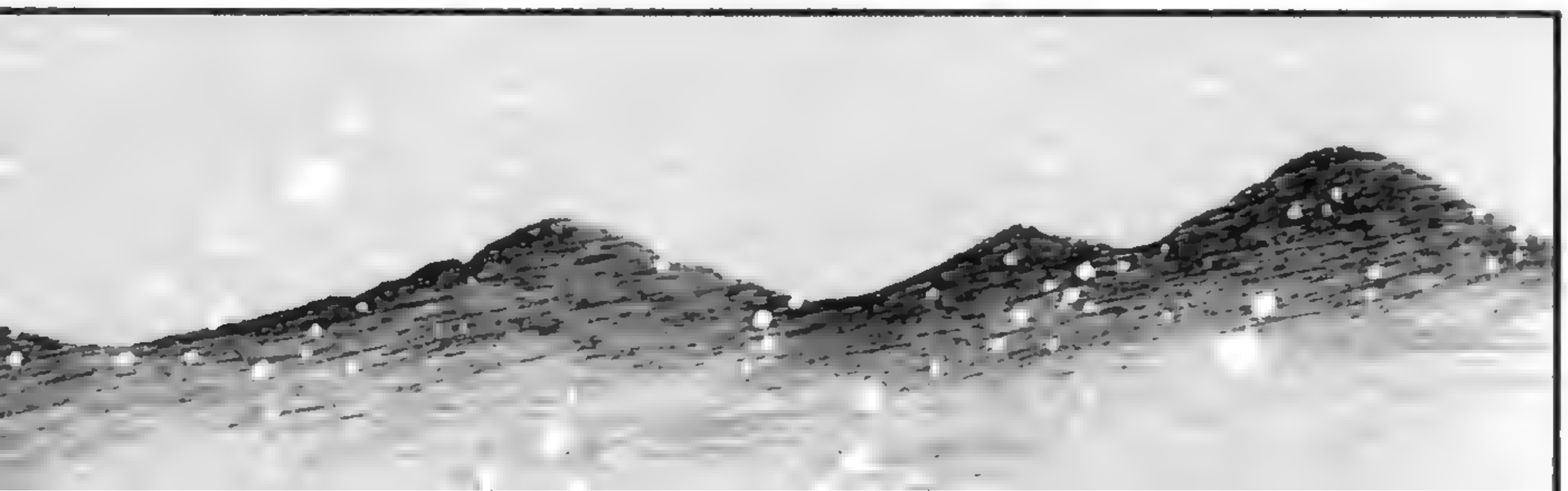

FWIP

GASP ...



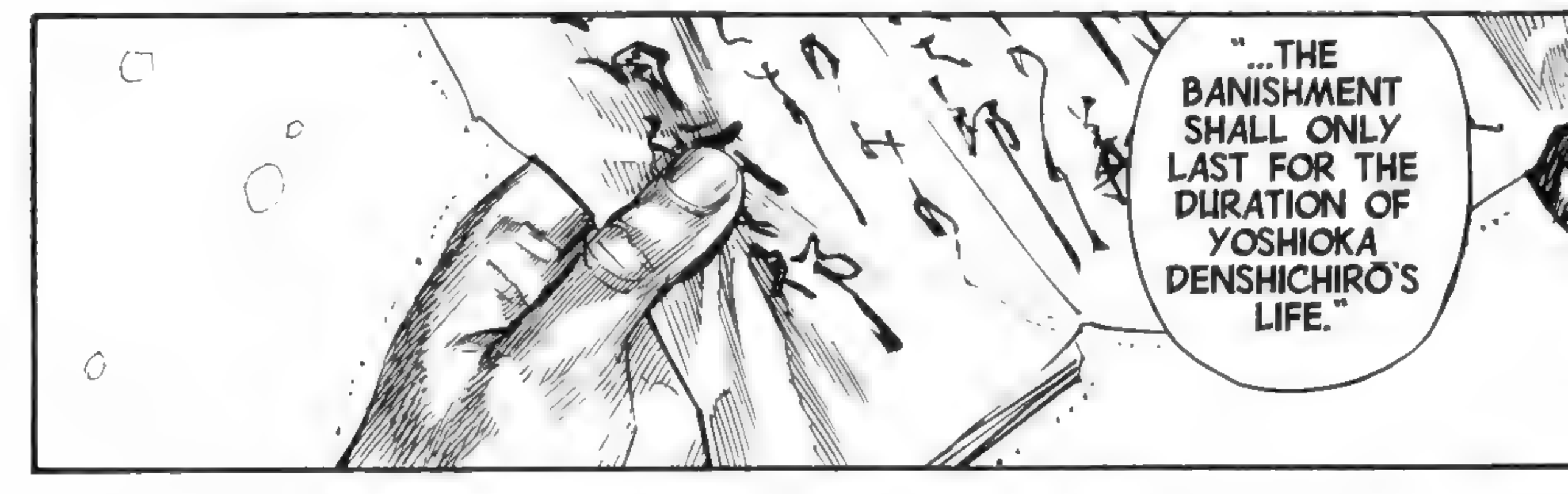
IT'S OKAY ...
THERE HE GOES! OTSU, HE'S LEAVING!
WHAT!? WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT!?
WHY DON'T YOU RUN AFTER HIM?!

I'M FINE RIGHT HERE.



"UEDA RYOHEI SHALL BE HEREBY BE BANISHED FROM THE SCHOOL...
"...HOW-EVER...

I FOUND THIS BY THE ALTAR THIS MORNING.


"...THE BANISHMENT SHALL ONLY LAST FOR THE DURATION OF YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRO'S LIFE."

Vagabond

#219 Unbreakable Bonds

"UEDA RYŌHEI SHALL BE HEREBY BE BANISHED FROM THE SCHOOL... HOWEVER...

"IF SOME MISFORTUNE SHOULD BEFALL THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL...

"...THE BANISHMENT WILL ONLY LAST FOR THE DURATION OF YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ'S LIFE.

DENSHI-CHIRŌ...

"UEDA SHALL BE REINSTATED...

"...AS THE HEAD MASTER OF THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL."

MUSASHI DREW OUT THE MASTER'S SHORT SWORD...
...AND SLASHED HIS STOMACH.

IS MUSASHI WAY BEYOND US NOW?

SUCH INCREDIBLE FINESSE...

HOW COULD HE HAVE DONE THAT IN THOSE CIRCUM-STANCES?

MASTER DENSHICHIRŌ...
YAHH !!!

YOICHI!
HEY!

GRRAH!
AHH!!

HERE!

?

AND YOU'LL BECOME A FATHER!
THE BABY'S DUE SOON, RIGHT?

WHAT ...
HERE!
FWP
WHAT IS IT? WHY'S IT MOVING?
FOR YOUR WIFE.

AN EEL.
VERY NUTRI-TIOUS.
SLTH
GASP!

SUCH A BIG HEART...

FICH

FICH

FICH

FICH
DOES THAT MEAN MUSASHI WON?

IS THAT DENSHICHIRŌ ...!?

HM...?
HEY, OVER THERE.
IT'S THE YOSHI-OKA SCHOOL.

COULD THAT REALLY BE TRUE?!
MUSASHI WON...?

FICH
FICH

FICH
FICH

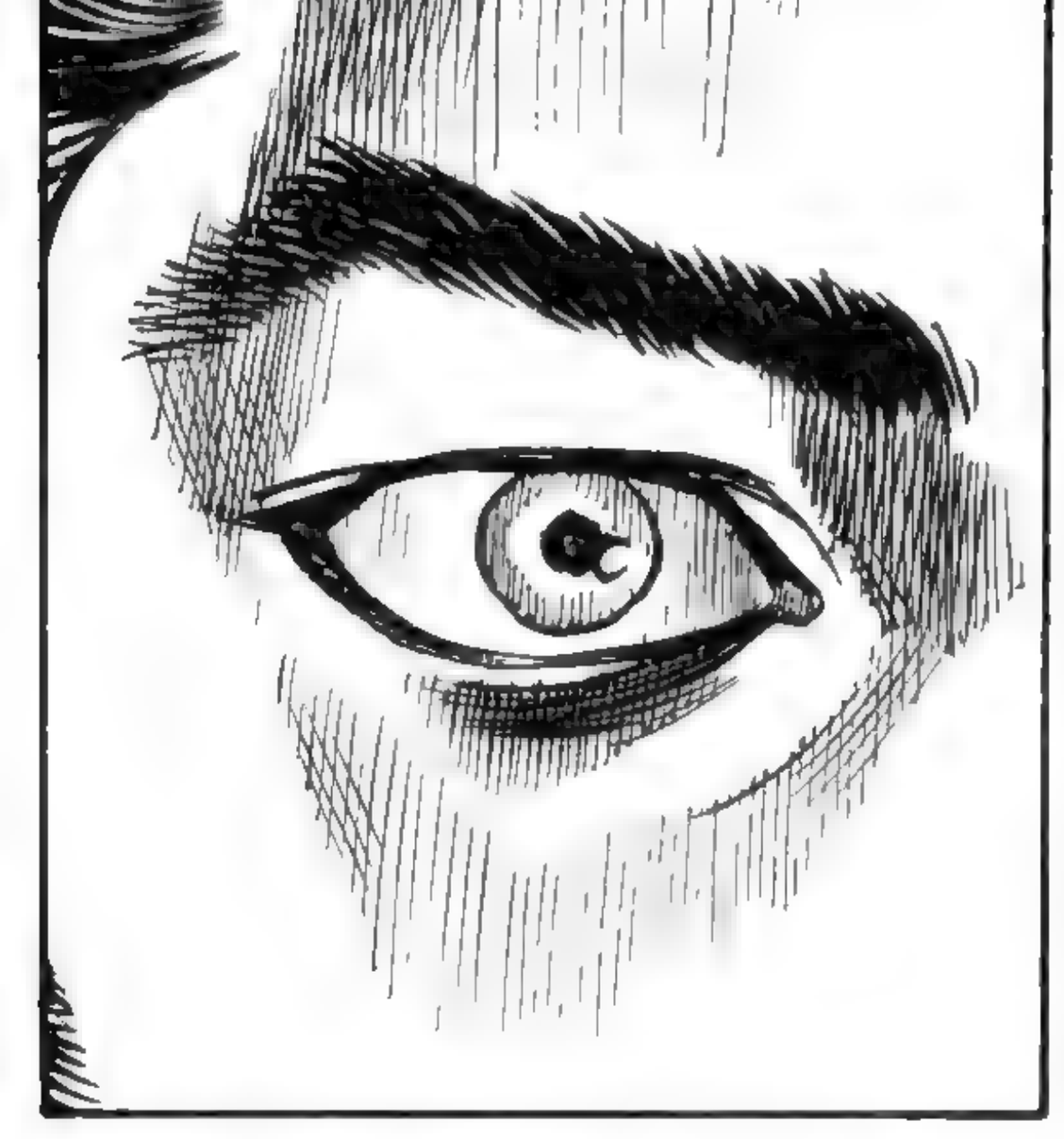
WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT SOMEONE WHO COULD ACTUALLY DEFEAT BOTH SEIJŪRŌ AND HIS BROTHER DENSHICHIRŌ.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE YOSHIOKA.

MUSASHI, THIS CANNOT BE FORGIVEN.

THEIR SCHOOL IS FINISHED.

FSH
...
WE SHALL ABIDE BY HIS WILL.
FICH



HMM...

HE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR.

MUSASHI WON'T LEAVE KYOTO ALIVE!

ZOLL

FICH

Vagabond

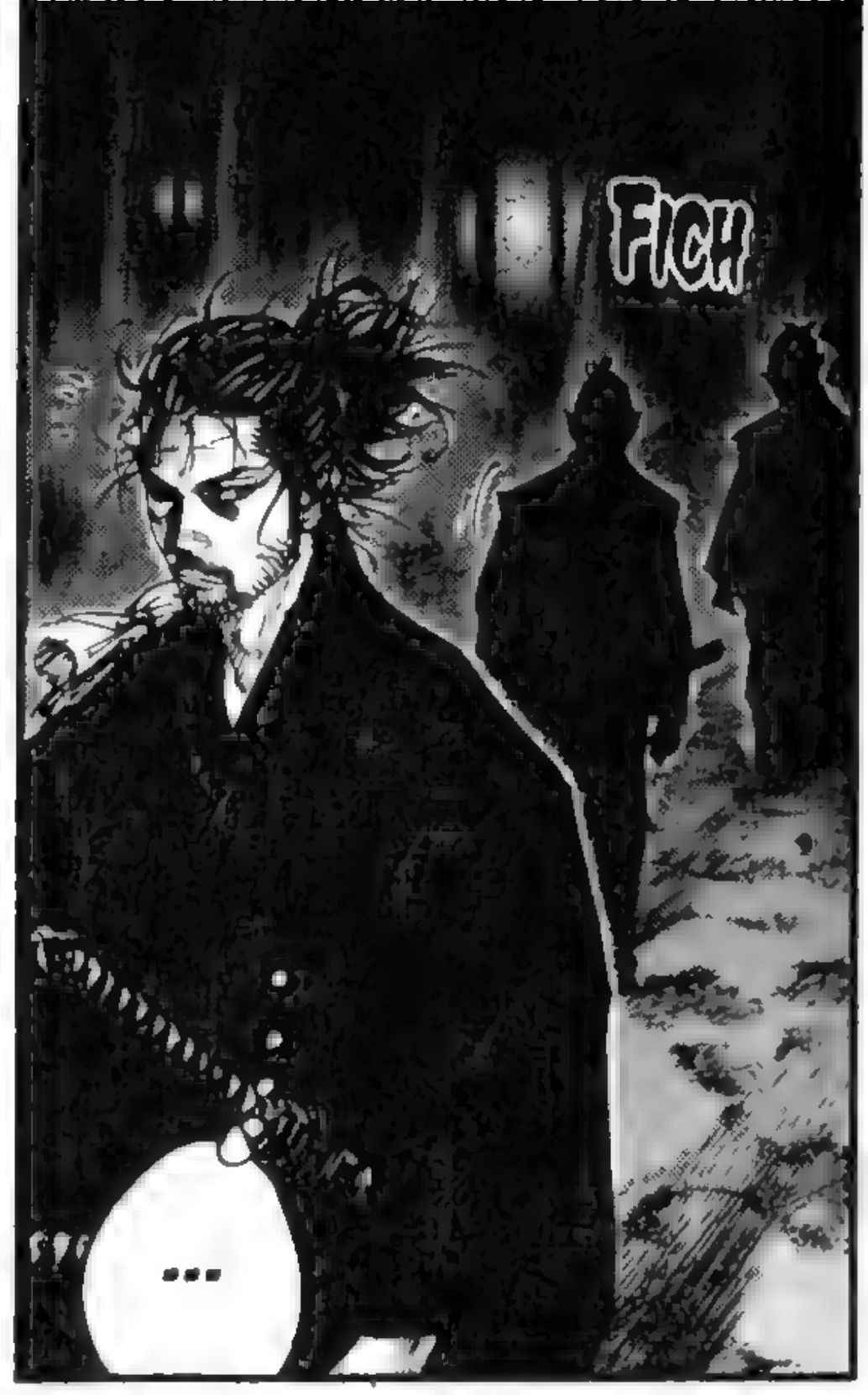
(FICH)

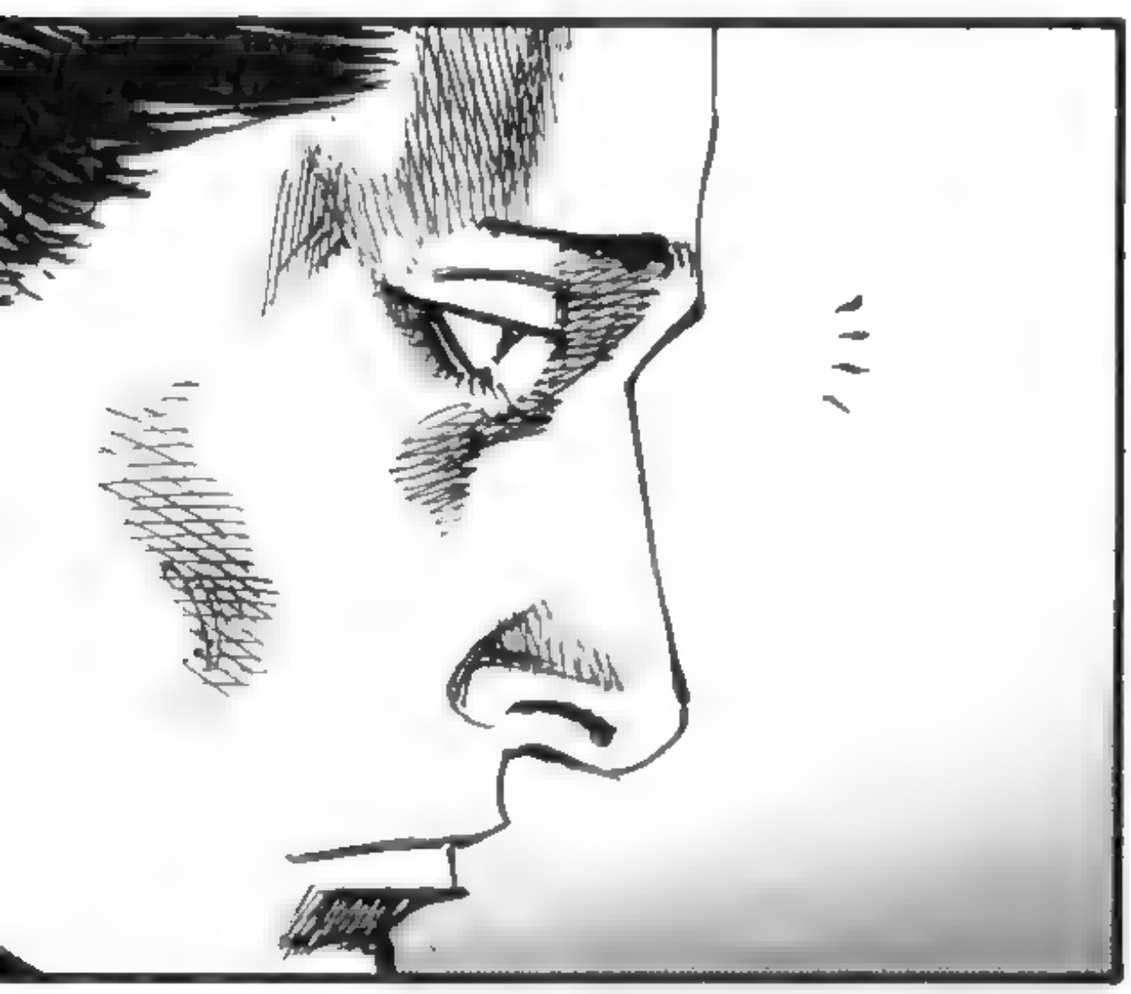
#220 Admiration and Hate

MUSASHI...

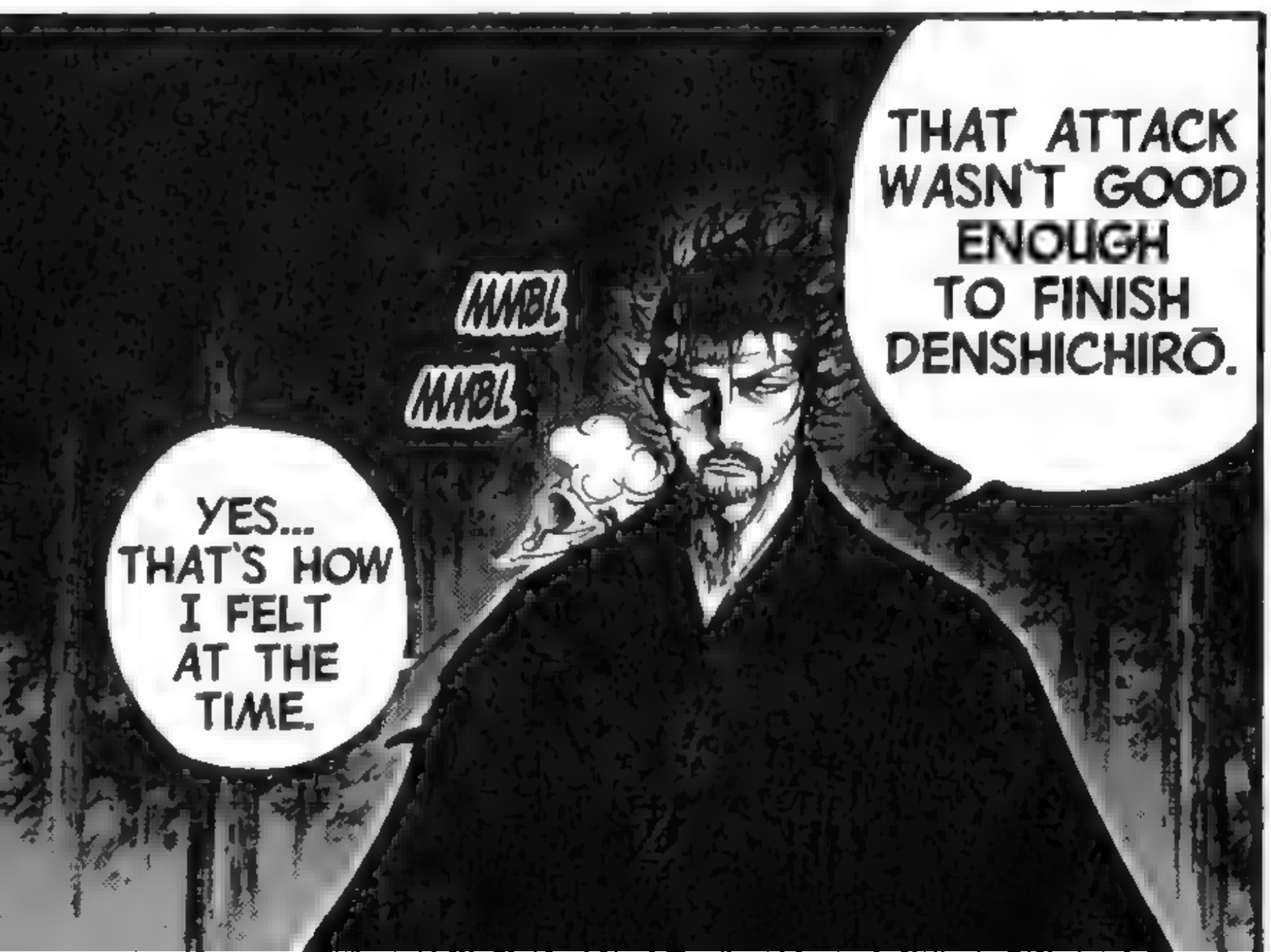
I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU...

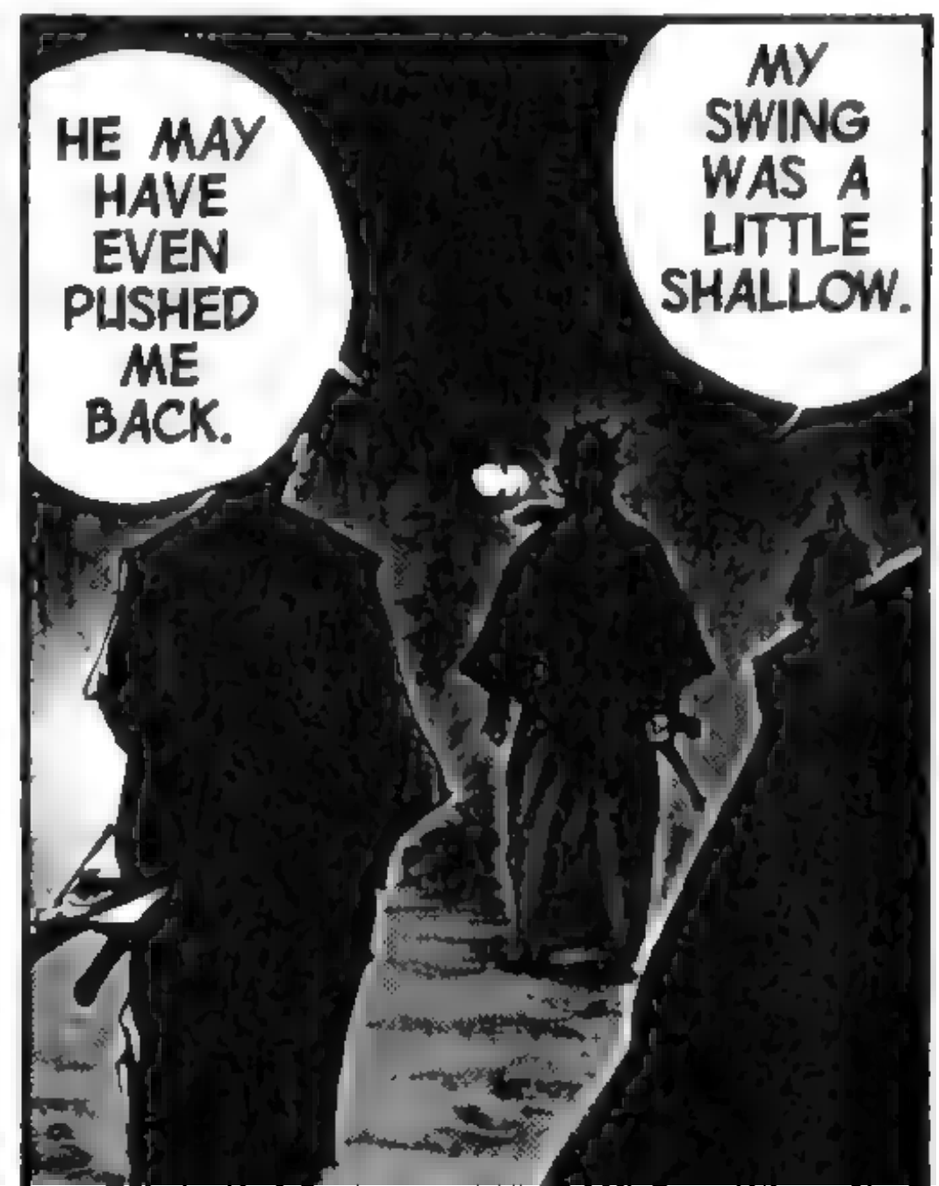
YOU TORE THROUGH MASTER DENSHICHIRŌ'S BELLY WITH HIS OWN SHORT SWORD.
WAS THAT A PREMEDITATED MOVE?
OR WAS IT SPONTAN-EOUS?


FICH
...



...
I DON'T KNOW...


THAT ATTACK WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO FINISH DENSHICHIRŌ.
MMBL
MMBL
YES... THAT'S HOW I FELT AT THE TIME.


HE MAY HAVE EVEN PUSHED ME BACK.
MY SWING WAS A LITTLE SHALLOW.

SO IT *WAS* SPON-TANEOUS ...
QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY, MUSASHI.

I DON'T RECALL THE REST.

FWP

(CHALLENGE)

願
仇承

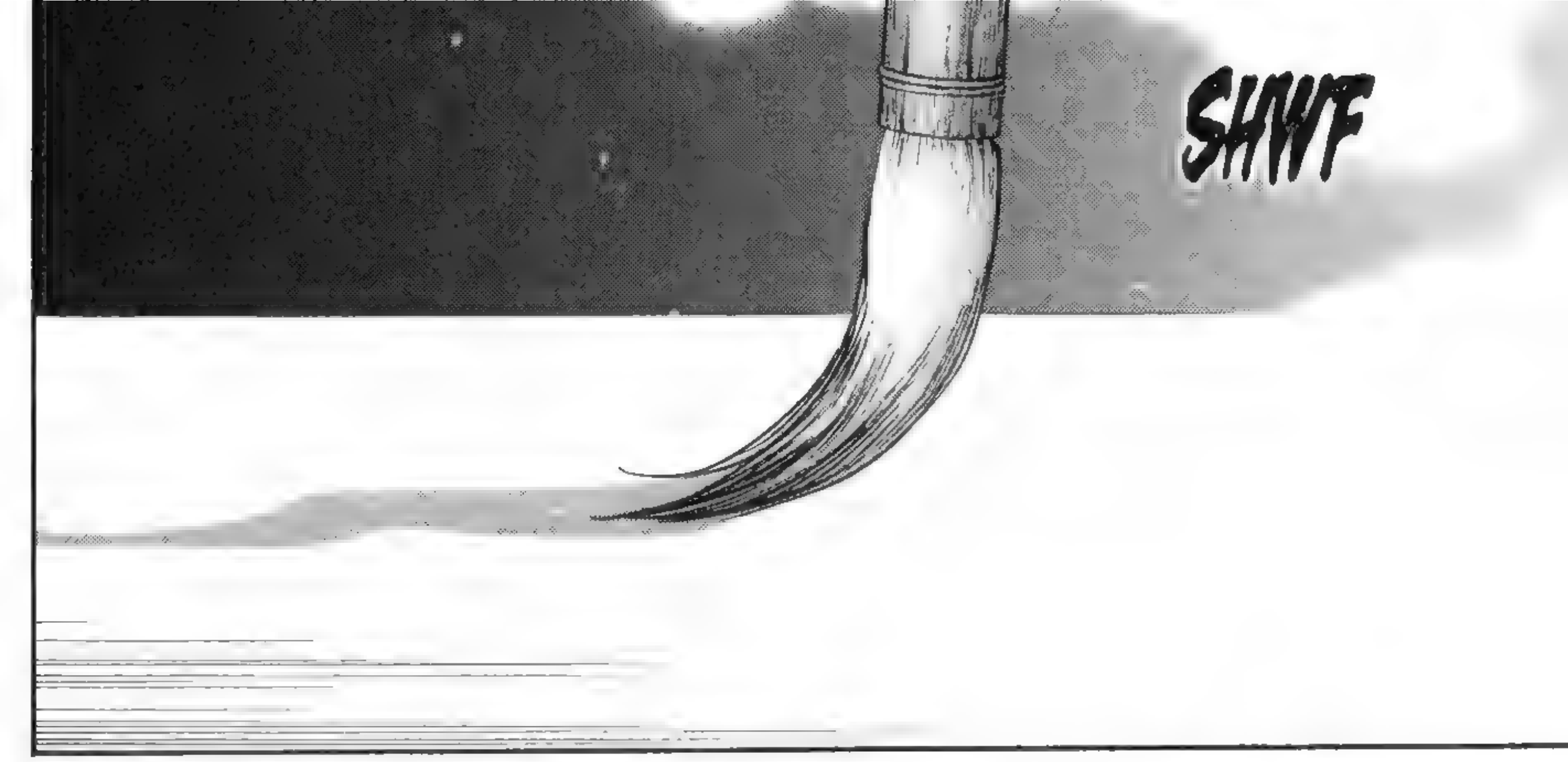
WE SHALL MEET AGAIN SOON.
READ THIS.

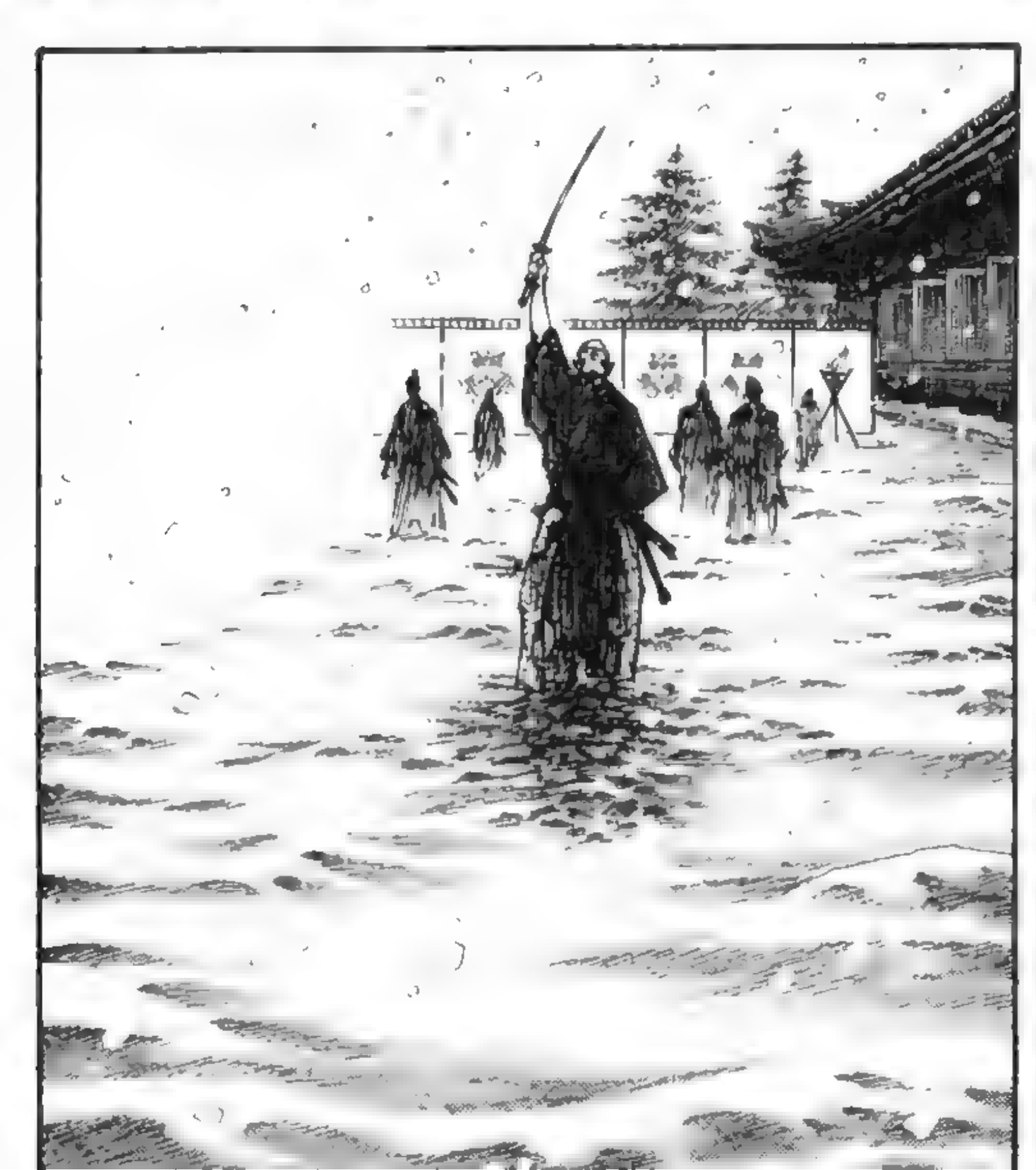
(ICHIJŌJI SAGARIMATSU)

(HEAD MASTER: UEDA RYŌHEI)

...LIES SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ADMIRATION AND HATE.
THE BOND BETWEEN US...
FSH

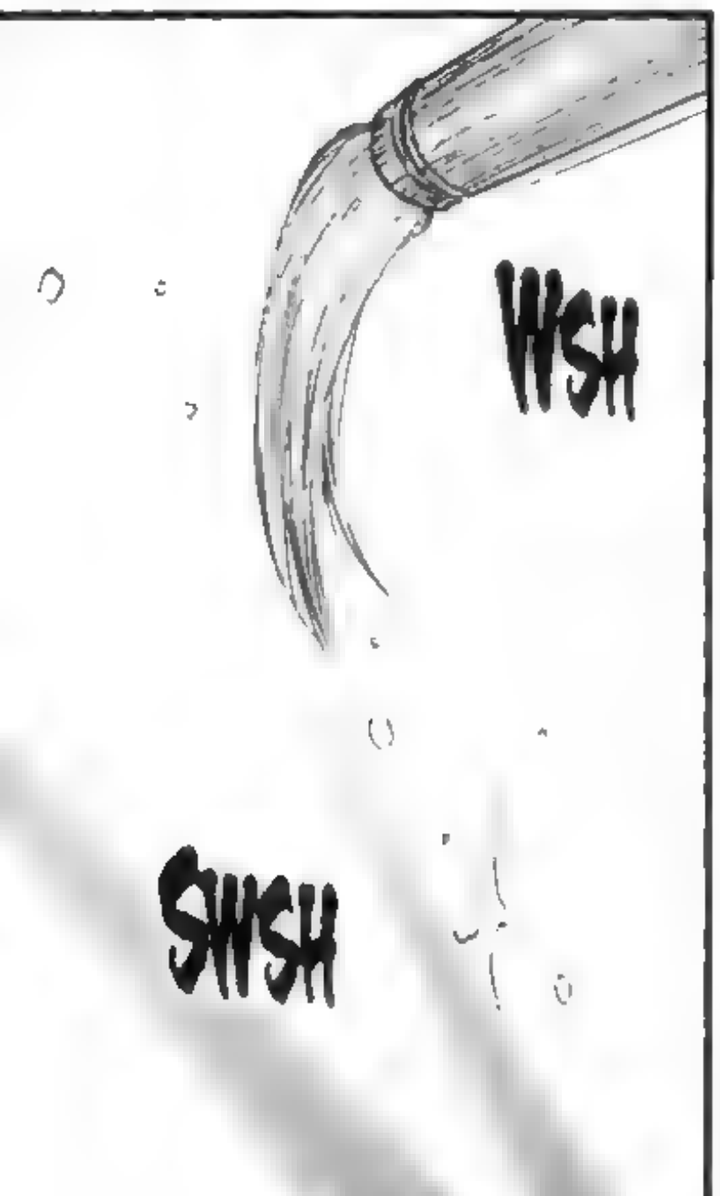
F
W
O
O
O
O
O
-S
H

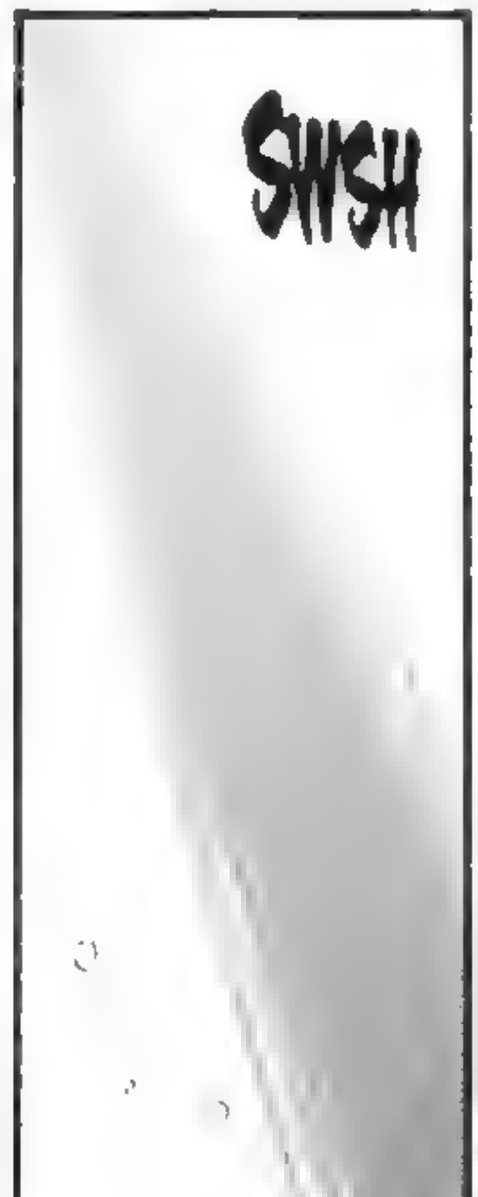

SHWF

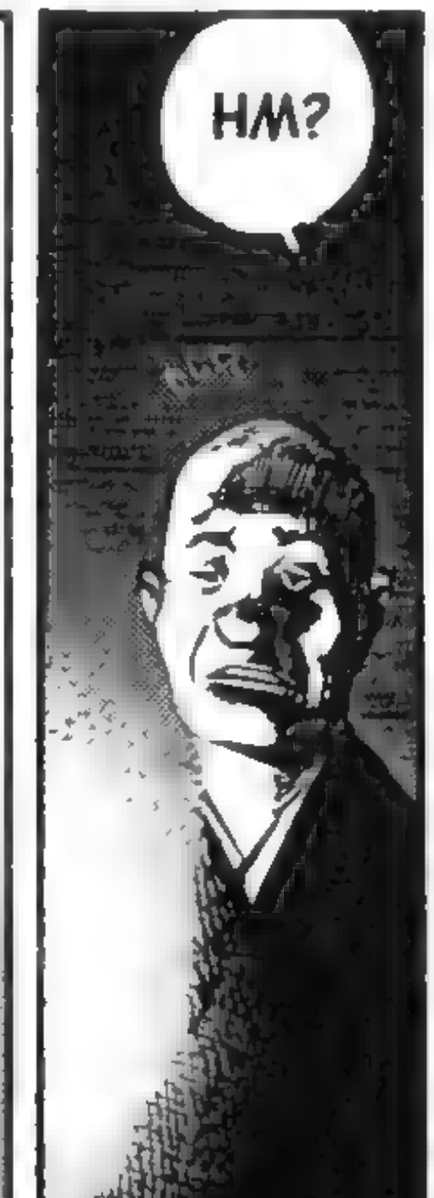


I WON, DIDN'T I?
PLIP

OF COURSE I DID.


WISH
SWISH


SWISH


HM?

NO THANKS!
I CAN BRING YOU SOME INK, SIR.

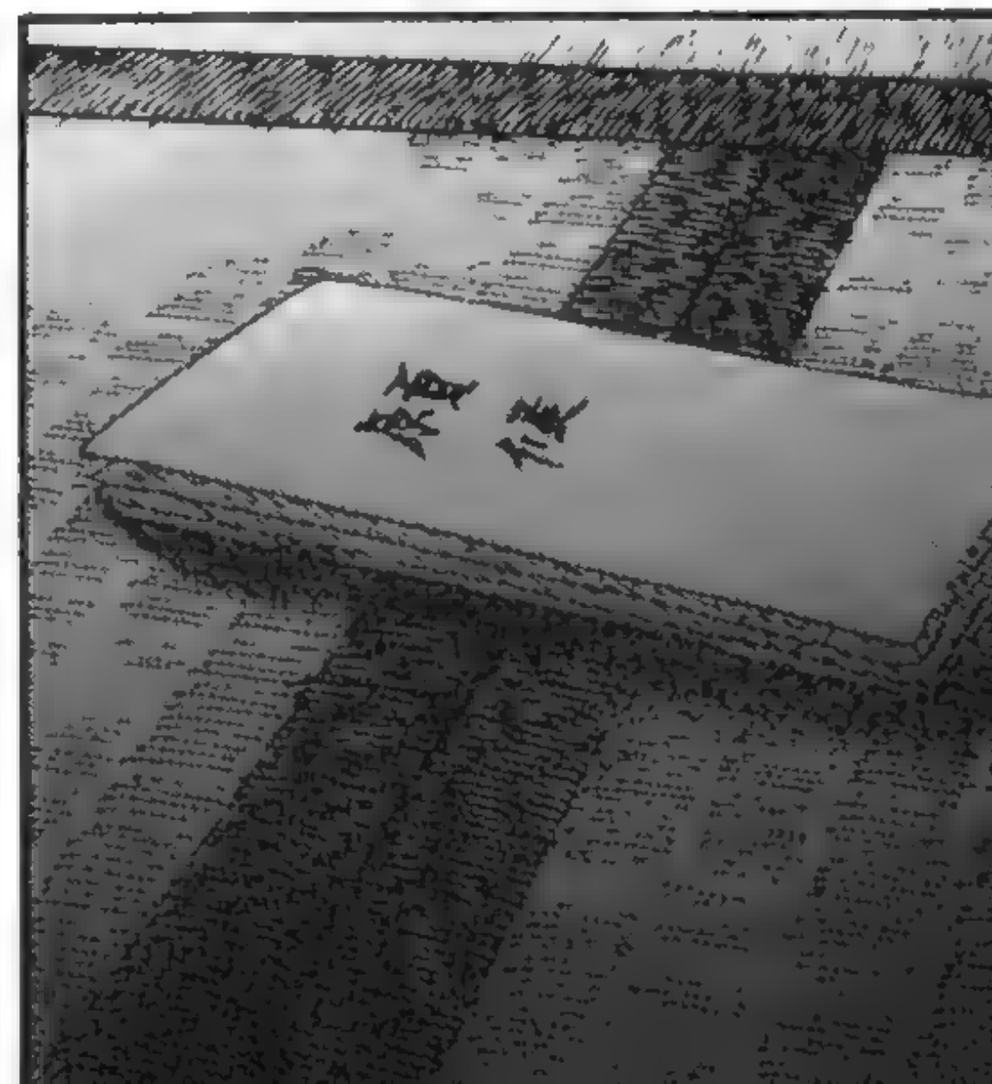
SWISH

SWSH

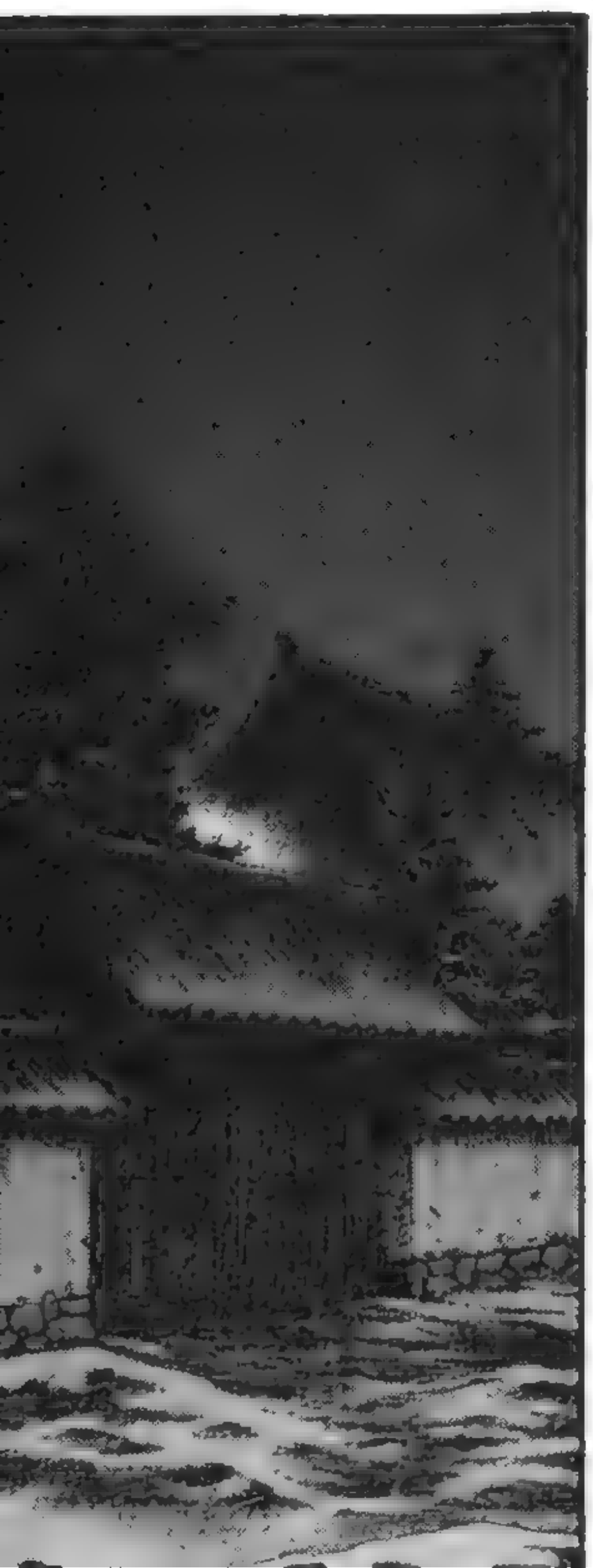
SWSH

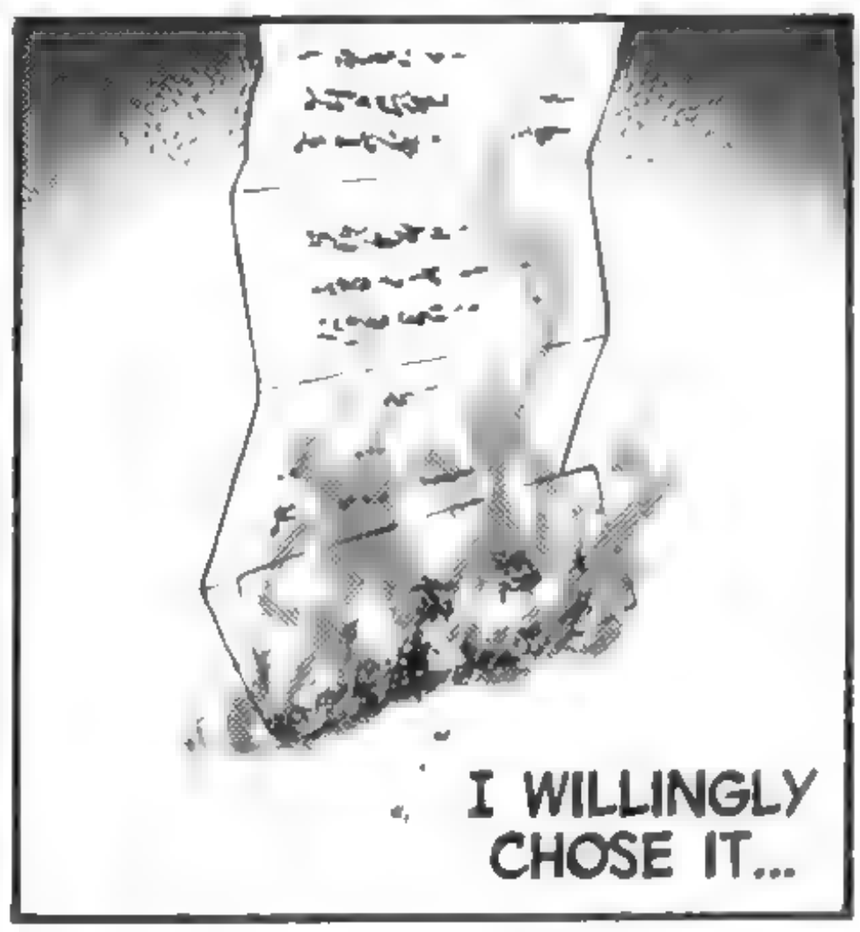
SWSH

(CHALLENGE)



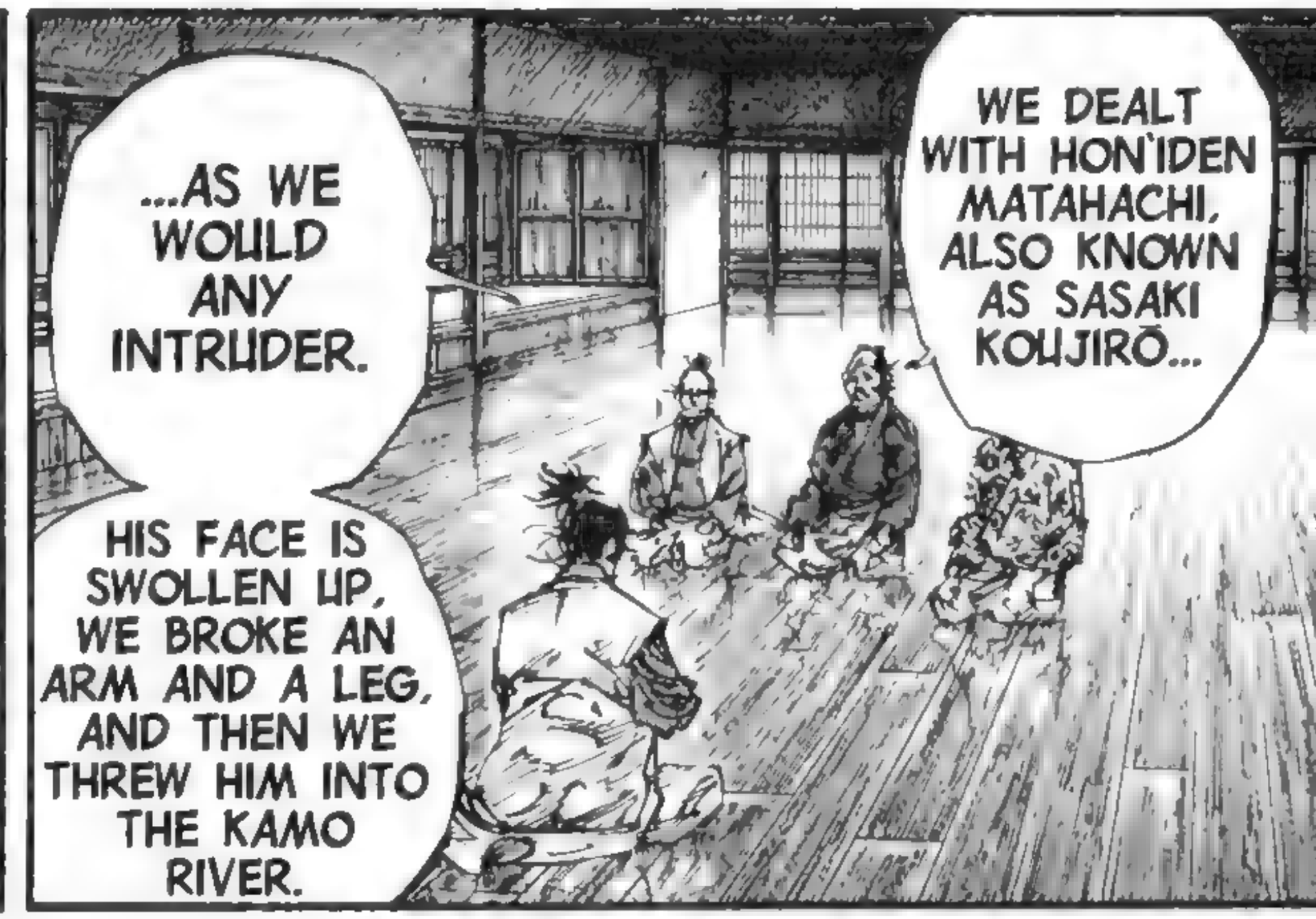
THIS SPIRAL OF DEATH AND KILLING...





(YOSHIOKA)

HE'S PROBABLY FACE DOWN ALONG THE BANK SOMEWHERE.
HEH HEH...


...AS WE WOULD ANY INTRUDER.
HIS FACE IS SWOLLEN UP, WE BROKE AN ARM AND A LEG, AND THEN WE THREW HIM INTO THE KAMO RIVER.
WE DEALT WITH HON'IDEN MATAHACHI, ALSO KNOWN AS SASAKI KOUJIRŌ...

UH...

W-WE ALSO CUT OFF HIS LEFT THUMB...
HE'LL NEVER PROPERLY WIELD A SWORD AGAIN.

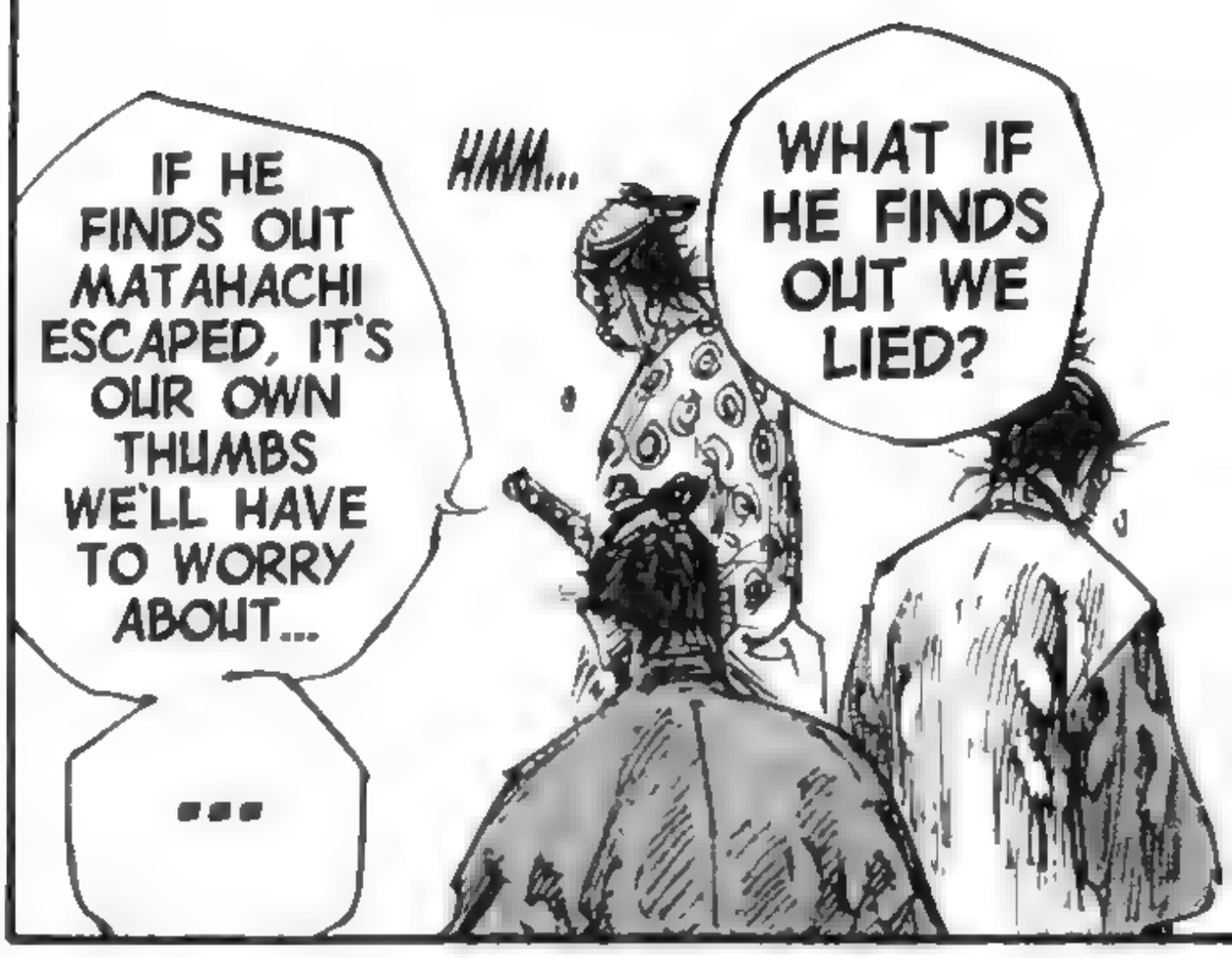
IS THAT ALL?
HUH?

THERE'S NO TRACE OF HIM.

H-HE COMPLETELY VANISHED. AS IF HE'S HOLED UP IN A CASTLE SOME-WHERE.

AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE KOJIRŌ IS?

FICH


IF HE FINDS OUT MATAHACHI ESCAPED, IT'S OUR OWN THUMBS WE'LL HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT...
HMM...
WHAT IF HE FINDS OUT WE LIED?
...

FICH
FICH

SAKÉ!
AND WARM IT UP!!

...
FICH
GASP!

HE DEFEATED BOTH SEIJŪRŌ AND DENSHI-CHIRŌ.

HM?!

I HAVE TO FIND KOJIRŌ...

MUTTER MUTTER

DID YOU HEAR MUSASHI KILLED DENSHI-CHIRŌ?

OF COURSE I HEARD.

WHAT AN EXTRA-ORDINARY MAN.

CHATTER

CHATTER

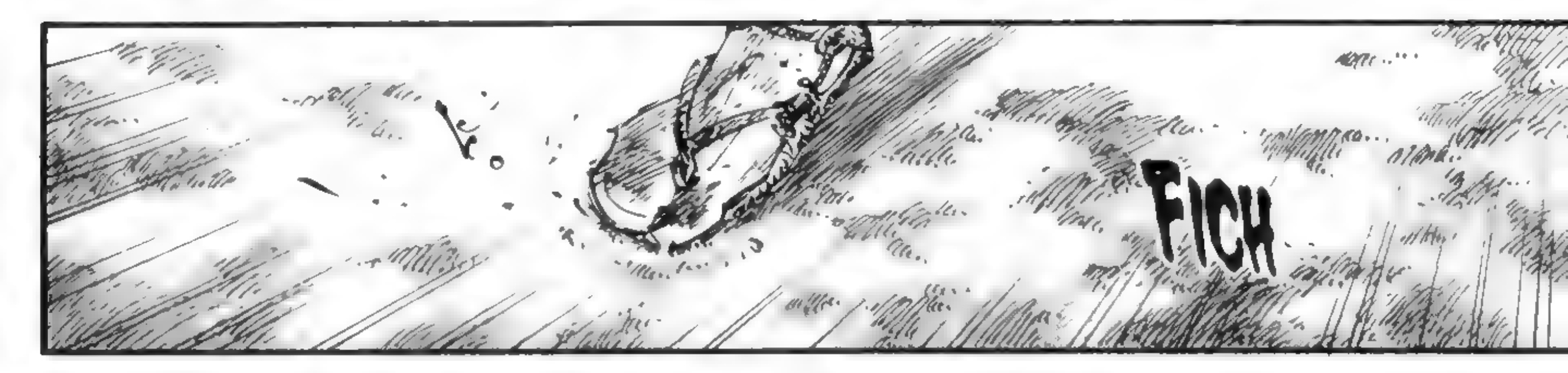
MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...

SHLRP

...FROM BACK HOME.

AN OLD FRIEND...

WHAT HAPPENED ?
DUNNO ...
HE DIDN'T PAY HIS BILL!
THE ONE WITH THE HAIR DANGLING ACROSS HIS FACE.
WHERE'S THAT ODD SAMURAI?
HEY!



FICH

I THOUGHT THIS WAS IT.

I FOUND HOPE.

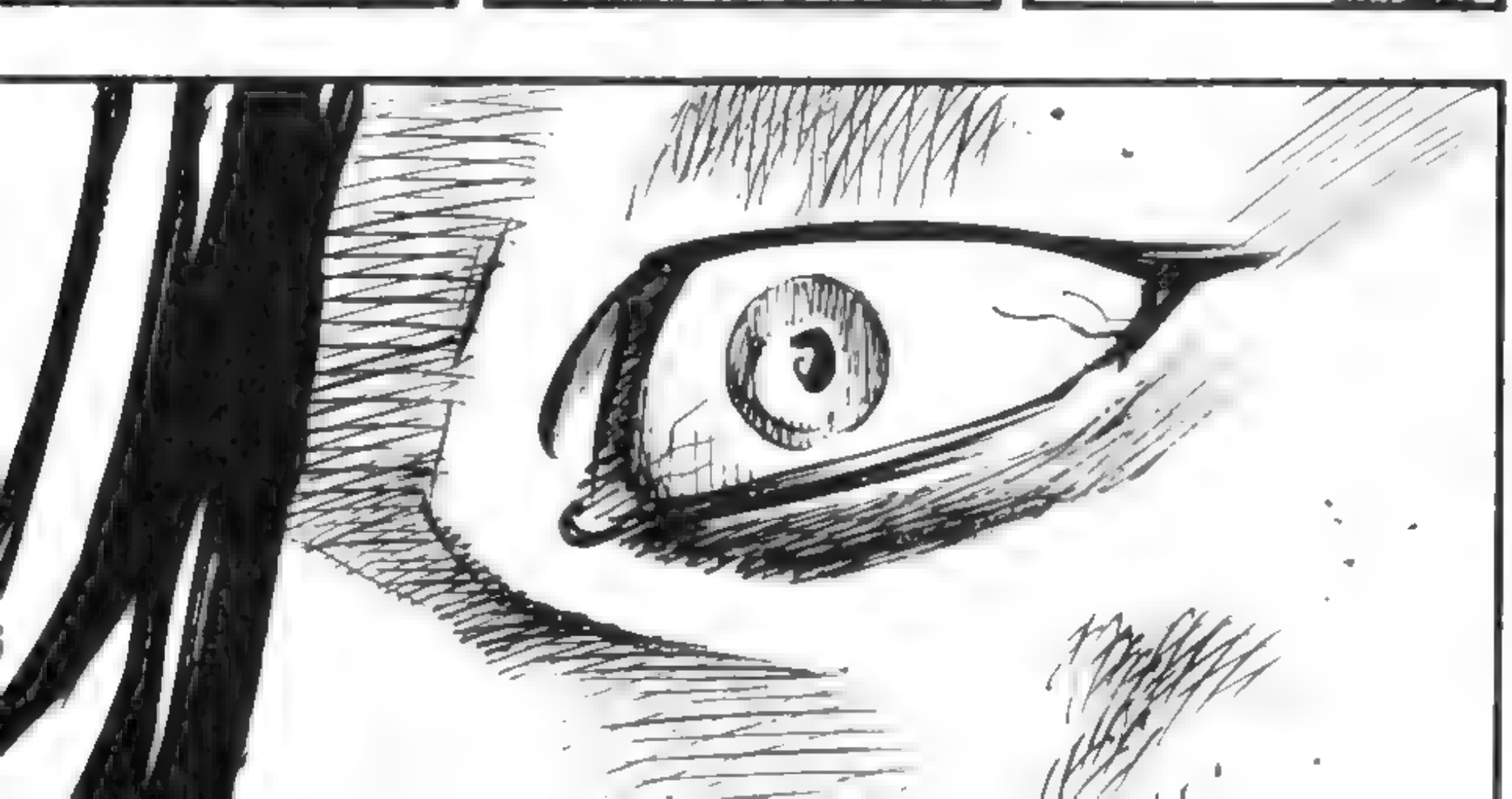
FICH

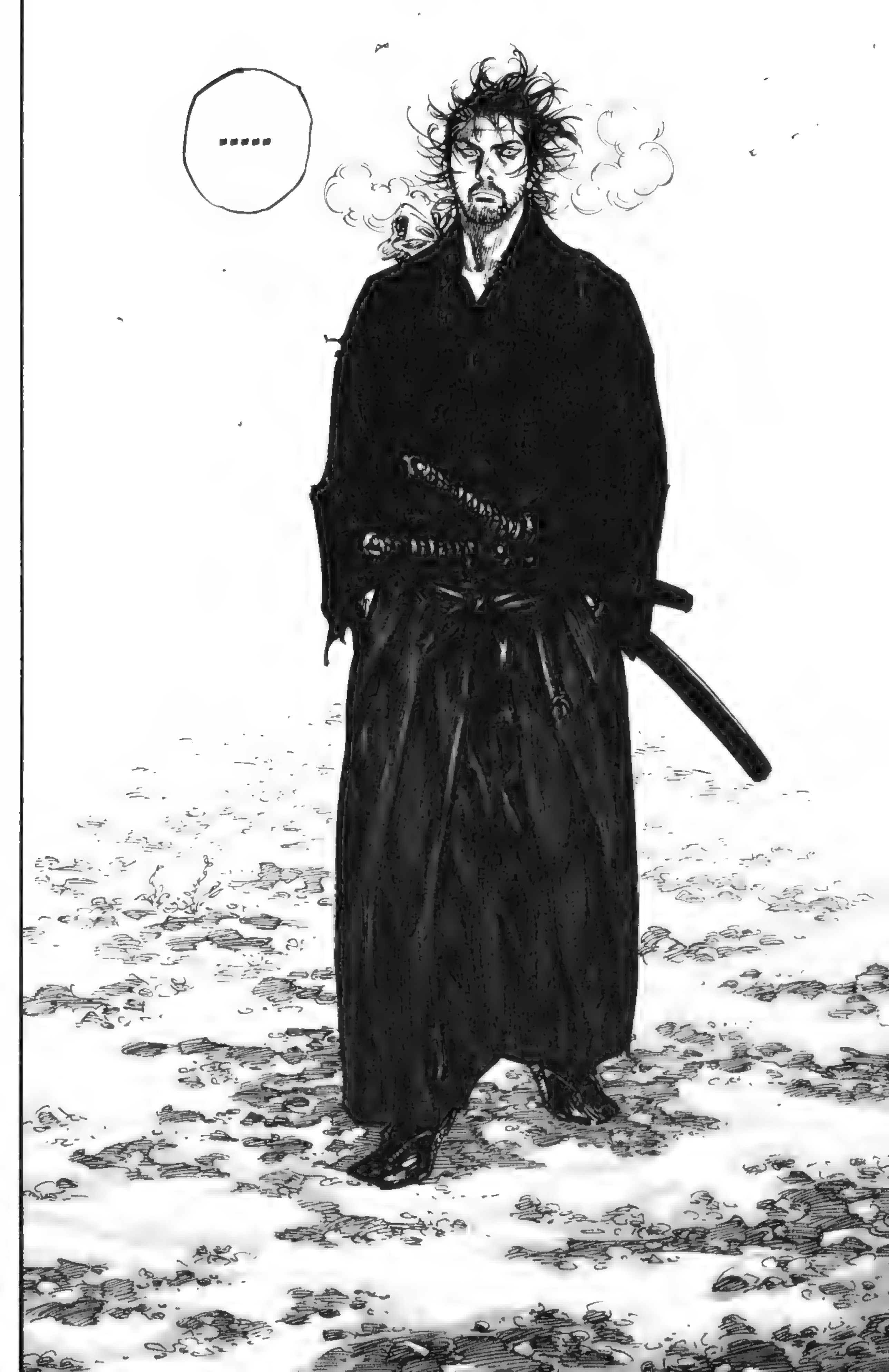
FICH

LET ME HELP YOU, KOJIRŌ.

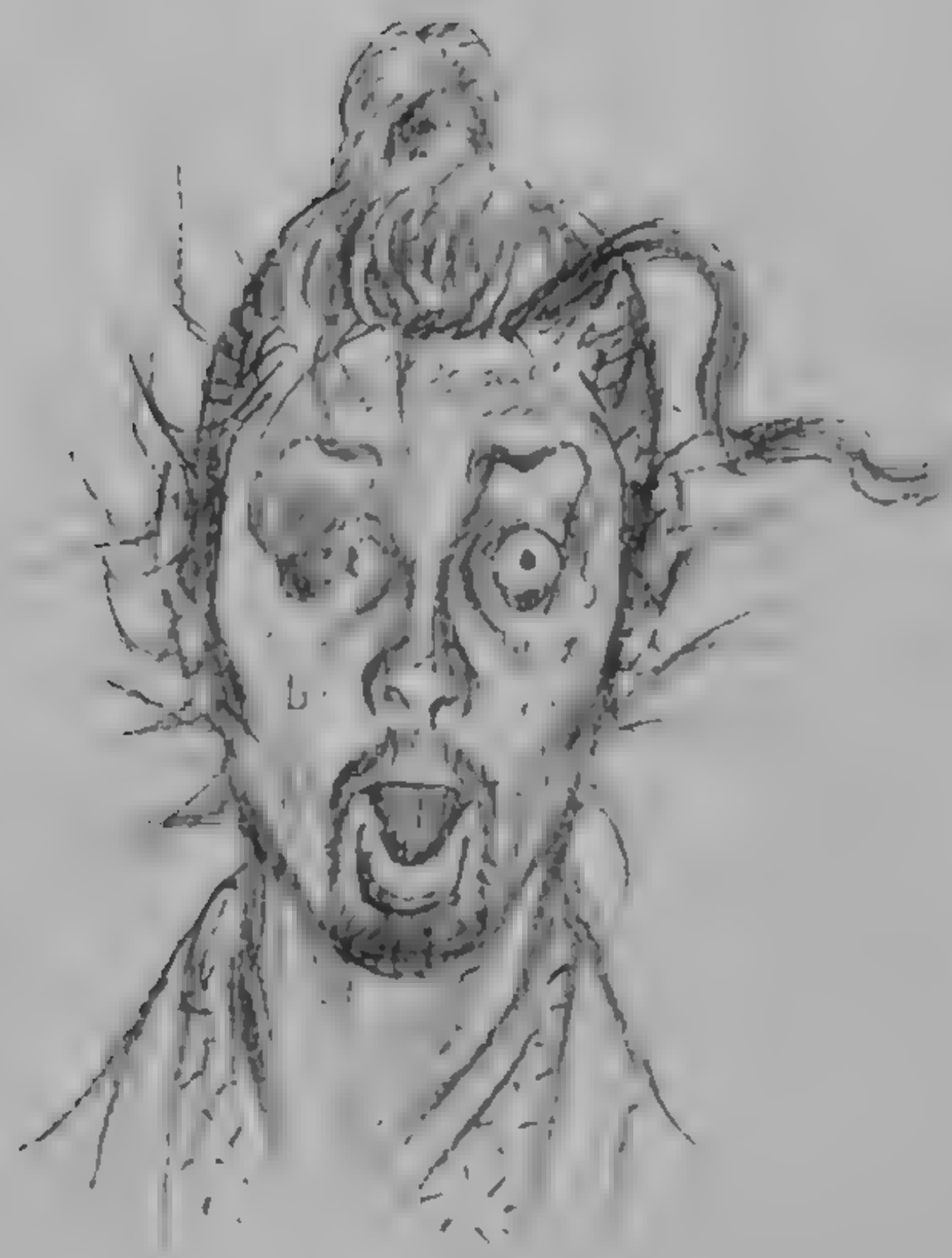
LET ME BE YOUR EARS AND MOUTH.

TOGETHER WE'LL--



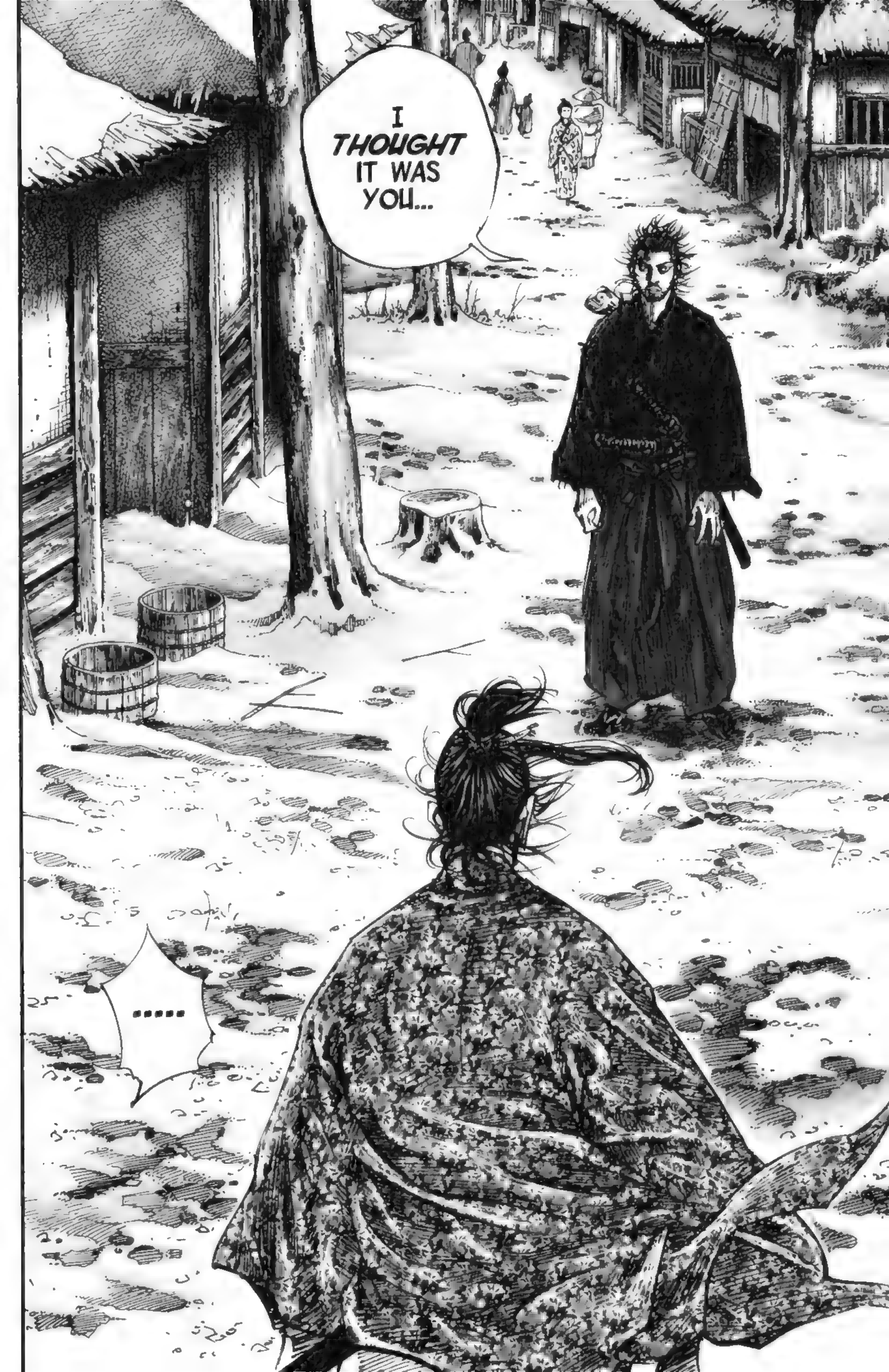


Vagabond



#221

Old Friends


I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU...
.....

MATAHACHI!

FWIP

TMP
TMP
TMP

HEY!

DASH
HUH!?
MATA-HACHI!

JUMP

YOU THINK YOU CAN OUTRUN ME, HUH?
HMPH!
...

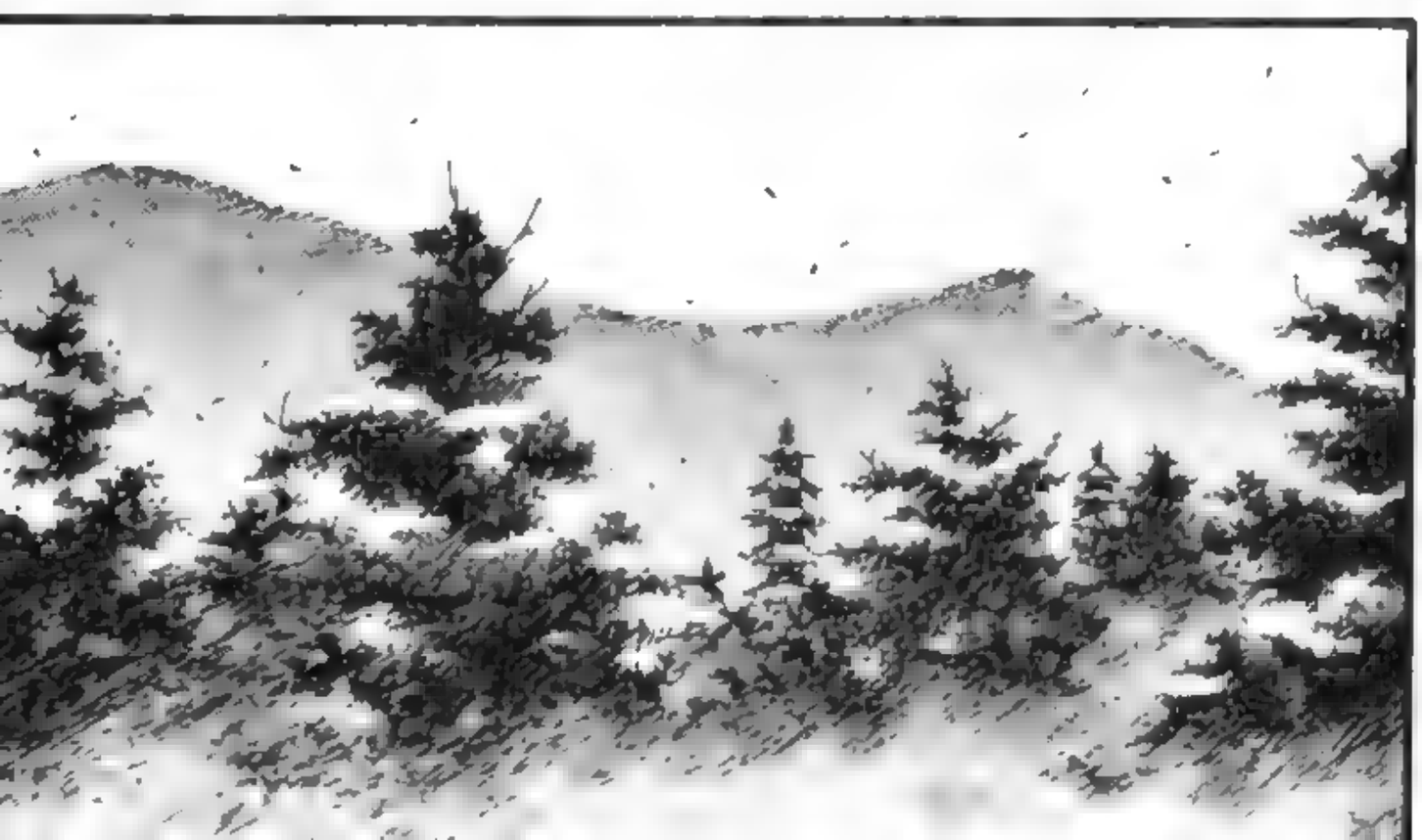
ZING

HUF
HUF
HUF

I SEE...
I DIDN'T ASK
HAK
HUF
HUF
KOFF
HUF

THAT'S WHY I'M SHORT OF BREATH.
I-I WAS JUST DOING SOME DRINKING...
HUF
HUF
HAK

HUF
HUF
HUF
KOFF
HUF
HUF
KOFF
HUF



WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?

NOTHING.

HA HA

YOU'RE ONE TO TALK.

YOUR FACE LOOKED LIKE THIS.

I REMEMBER! THAT WAS HILARIOUS!

AND YOUR FACE WAS THE BIGGEST LAUGH OF ALL!

NO, IT DIDN'T!

HA

AND IT SEEMS GRANNY HON'IDEN IS AS CROTCHETY AS EVER.

HEH HEH

MAKES THE SORES ON MY MOUTH STING.

STOP MAKING ME LAUGH...

THERE'S GOING TO BE A MAJOR BATTLE.

LET'S GO, TAKEZŌ!

WE'LL MAKE NAMES FOR OUR-SELVES!

...
SNAP!

...

...
I WAS STIFF AND RIGID.
YES... I WAS.
I'M SURPRISED I MADE IT THIS FAR.

SO NAÏVE...
...

HEH!

COME ON. YOU'RE THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

WHEN I FIRST CAME HERE...

SCRTCH SCRTCH

YOUR REPUTATION GROWS BY THE DAY, TAKEZŌ...

I MEAN, MUSASHI.

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.

BLEH! IT FEELS SO WEIRD TO HEAR YOU CALL ME THAT.

CALL ME TAKEZŌ.

BUT THEN I HEARD ABOUT YOU!

I WAS TERRIFIED.

I FELT SO PATHETIC.

EVERYONE LOOKED SO SOPHISTICATED.

IT'S WONDERFUL--!

GOOD GOING, TAKEZŌ!

HA HA HA!

HOW WONDERFUL!

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, THE MIGHTY SWORDSMAN WHO DEFEATED THE YOSHIOKA BROTHERS...

...TURNED OUT TO BE MY OLD FRIEND TAKEZŌ...

HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT ...?
HUH?
IT WAS JUST A YEAR AGO. YOU TRIED TO TAKE ON THE YOSHIOKA AND BARELY CAME OUT WITH YOUR LIFE.

WHEW

THERE'S NO WAY I COULD DRINK THAT MUCH.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD SLOW DOWN...
YOU OKAY?

FWIP

FORGET IT, I DON'T NEED TO MENTION THAT...
MMBL MMBL...
LATER I SAW YOU FIGHTING SHISHIDO BAIKEN, THE MASTER OF THE SICKLE AND CHAIN...
I WAS THE ONE WHO CARRIED YOU TO THAT TAVERN.

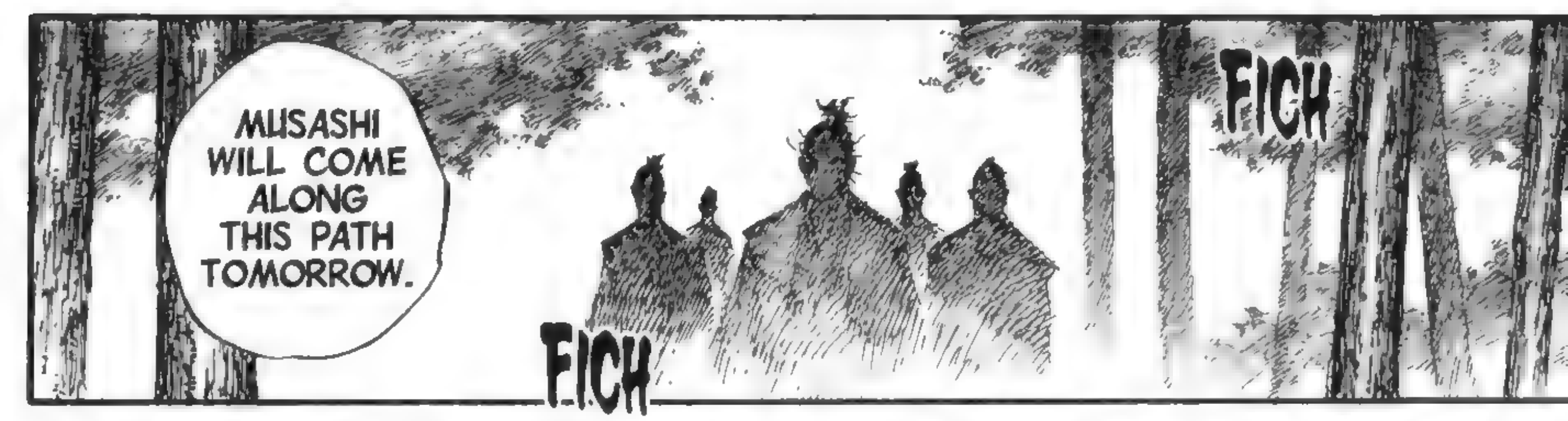
BUT *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO MADE A NAME FOR YOURSELF.

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD BACK THEN...

YOU REALLY DID IT, TAKEZŌ!

...

FICH
FICH
FICH



OUR MASTERS MAY HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN ONE AFTER THE OTHER, BUT THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL STILL STANDS.

WE SHALL NOT WAVER...

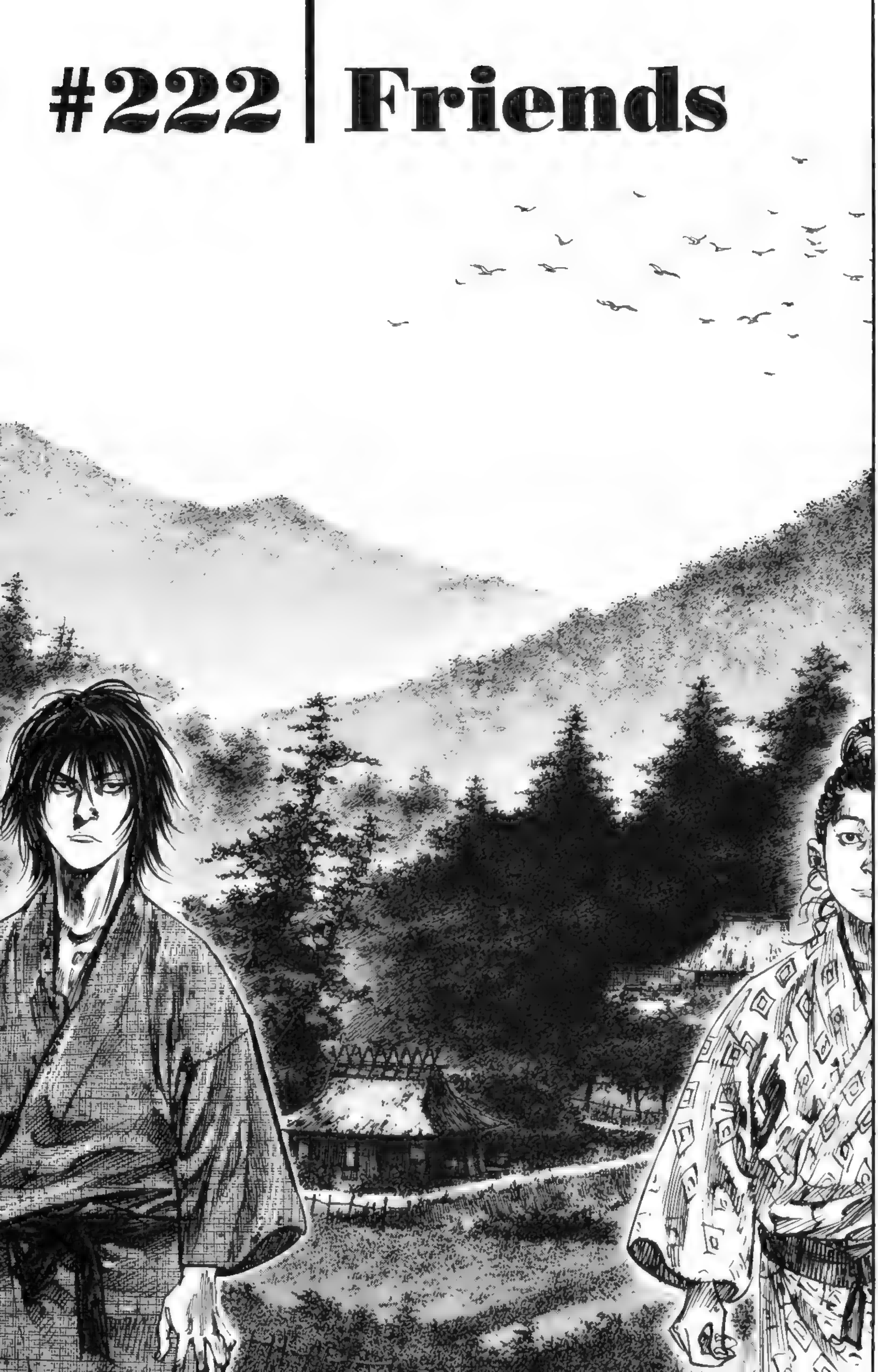
AND WE WILL NOT FADE AWAY.

MUSASHI MUST DIE.
WE'LL CUT HIS BODY TO SHREDS.

Vagabond

(WHAT!?)

#222 | Friends



THIS PLACE IS DESERTED EVEN DURING THE DAY...

NOT A SOUL WILL BE AROUND AT THE BREAK OF DAWN.

...A SINGLE SWORDSMAN FROM THE SCHOOL ROSE UP TO AVENGE THE DEATHS OF HIS MASTERS.

AFTER THE YOSHIOKA BROTHERS WERE SUCCESSIVELY CUT DOWN...

THOSE THINGS...

...TREACHEROUS OR NOT...

WHETHER IT'S RIGHT OR WRONG...

...YOU CAN REFLECT UPON ALL YOU WANT *AFTER* MUSASHI'S BEEN CUT DOWN.

ABANDON ALL THOUGHTS OF TAKING ON MUSASHI ON EQUAL TERMS...

TAGAYA...

HIGASHI ...

FUJIIE...

YOICHI ...

KURANDO ...

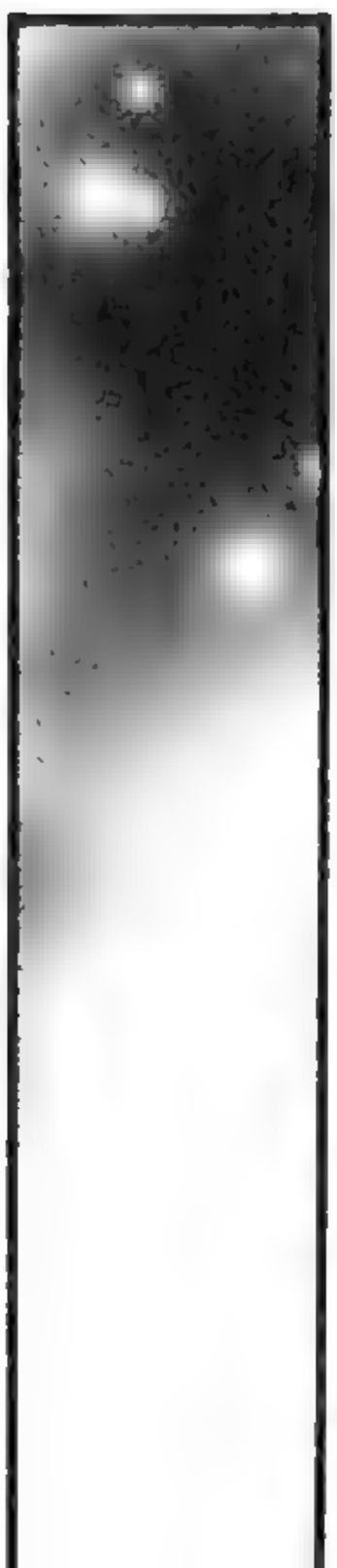
ATTACK HIM FROM BEHIND.

.....

.....

FICH

FCH



.....

LAST NIGHT...DID I REALLY TALK TO TAKEZŌ?
FICH
WAS IT JUST A DREAM ...?
FICH

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MADE A NAME FOR YOURSELF.

SHK

.....

SHK

YOU REALLY DID IT, TAKEZŌ...

AT LEAST DON'T START SOBBING.

WHY AM I CRYING !?

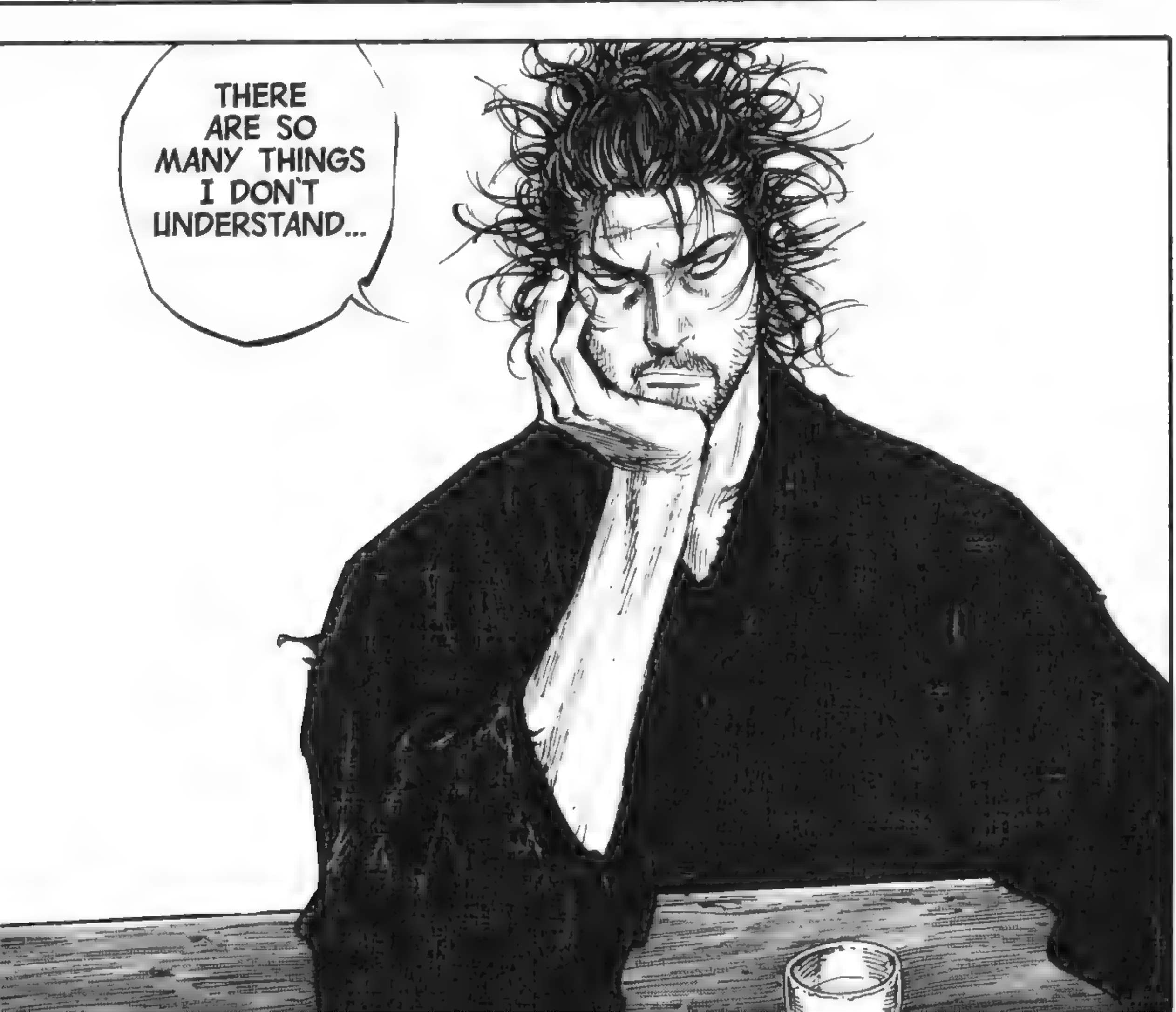
DON'T YOU DO IT, MATA-HACHI!

...

I'VE STILL GOT...

NO...

I CAN FINALLY APOLOGIZE ...



YOU'RE NOT DONE?

...!!

HUF
HUF
HUF
WAIT!
HEY!
COME ON, TAKEZŌ!!

WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?

JUDGING FROM YOUR CLOTHING, I'D SAY YOU'RE DOING PRETTY WELL FOR YOURSELF...

FORGET ABOUT ME!

HM?

FWIP

"YOU'VE STILL GOT FAR TO GO"!? HAH!

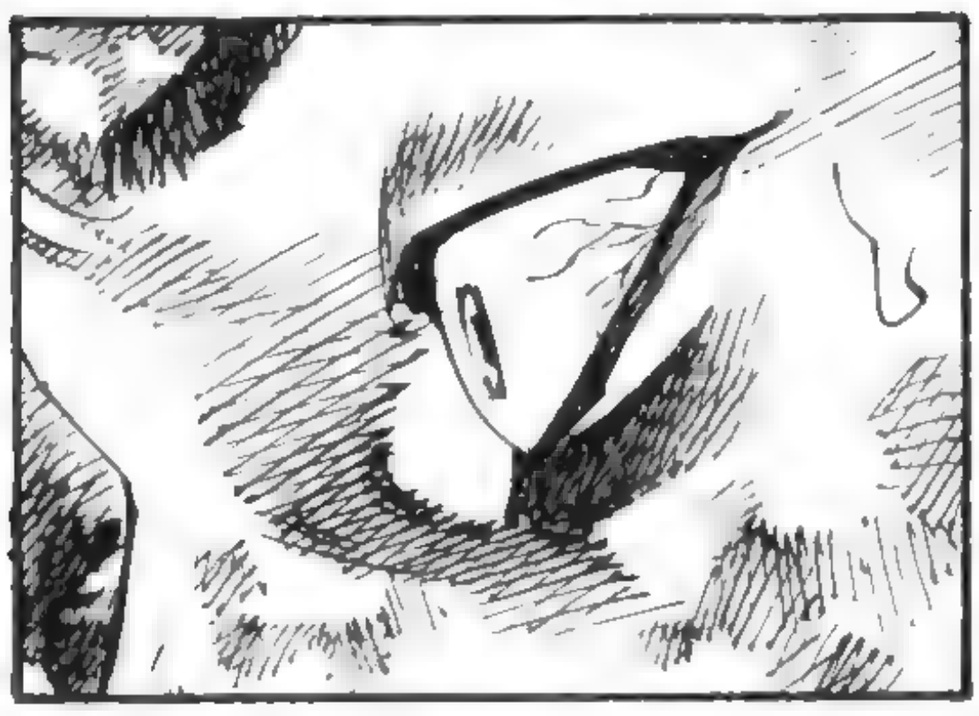
GGGRRR

WHO CARES!

...

STOP THE FALSE MODESTY!

FWEE



YOU'RE JUST A COUNTRY BUMPKIN WHO RAN AROUND IN THE MOUNTAINS LIKE SOME WILD ANIMAL!

YOU HAVE NO FORMAL TRAINING! NO MASTER!

HARDLY EVER!

I ONLY WENT WITH YOU A COUPLE TIMES!

HAH!

YOU AND ME BOTH.

HE'S WAY BEYOND YOU!

HAVE YOU HEARD OF SASAKI KOJIRŌ?

YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD!

AHH! AHH!

HUF HUF

THE GANRYU STYLE!

SASAKI KOJIRO!

HE'D HAVE YOU ON YOUR KNEES!

AND HIS PARTNER HOUJIRO.

URRR
URRR
...

TUGG
RIGHT... INTER-ESTING FELLOW.
?!
YOU KNOW HIM!?

KOJIRŌ CAN'T TALK!
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

I KNOW BECAUSE ...
YOU'RE LYING!
I RECENTLY JUST TALKED TO HIM.

I'LL TELL YOU...
Y-YOU ASKED ME WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING.
I'M SASAKI--
HEY!

HOW ODD...
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT IT FELT LIKE WE HAD A CONVERSA-TION.

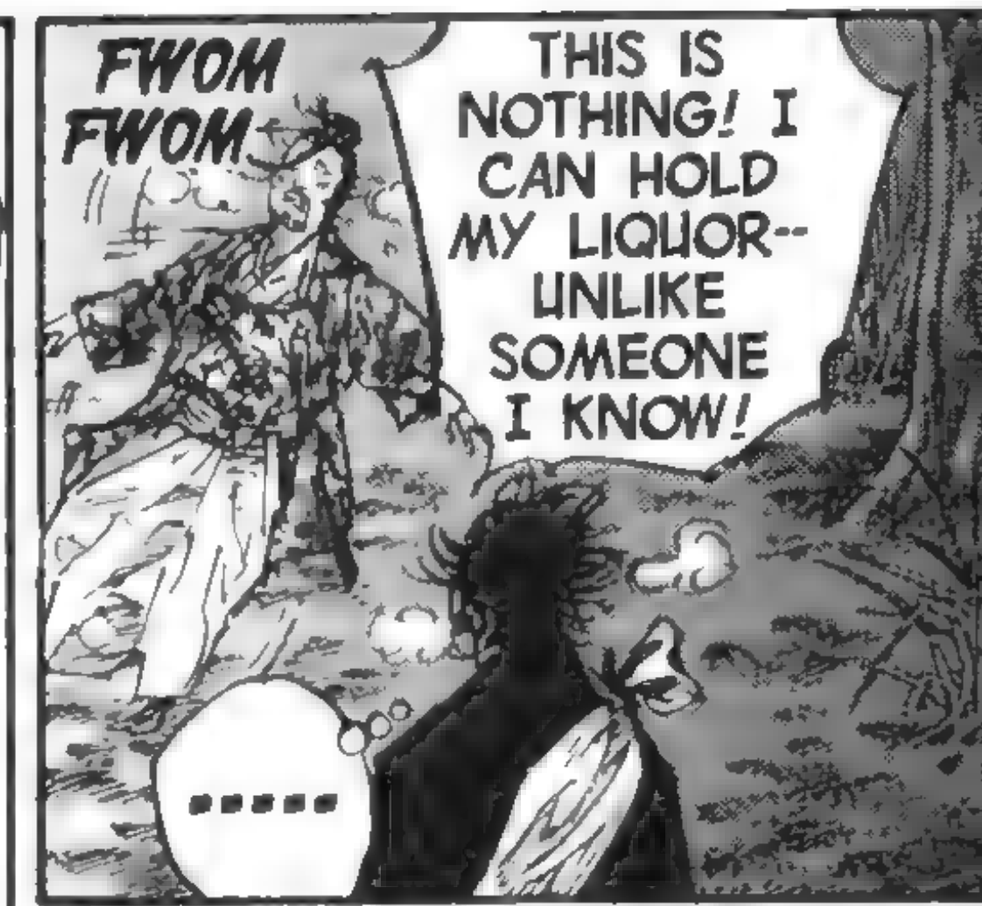
!
HM?
NO CHARGE ?

WHAT!
I WANT YOU TWO OUT OF HERE. YOU'RE SCARING THE OTHER CUSTOMERS!
JUST LEAVE! I WON'T EVEN ASK YOU TO PAY.
I DON'T WANT ANY MORE BROKEN CUPS!

SHUT UP! I'M NOT DRUNK!
YOU'RE DRUNK. YOU CAN'T EVEN WALK STRAIGHT.

HEY...
WHERE'S OTSU...?

.....


FWOM FWOM
THIS IS NOTHING! I CAN HOLD MY LIQUOR-- UNLIKE SOMEONE I KNOW!
.....

HUH?

FWIP FWIP

YOU KNOW, MY FIANCÉE?

WHERE IS SHE?

FWOOSH

.....

...WITH TAKEZŌ.

SHE LEFT THE VILLAGE...

DON'T BE STUPID ...

HOW OLD DO YOU THINK THEY ARE?

THEN... TH-THOSE TWO...

THEY'RE ...

...IN-VOLVED?

?

I KNOW EVERY-THING!

YOU'RE TOGETHER, RIGHT? I KNOW!

HA HA HA HA!

WITH HIS WOMAN IN TOW! WHAT A LAUGH!
HAH!
AN ERRANT SWORDSMAN FOLLOWING THE AUSTERE WAY OF THE SWORD, EH?

HOW IS SHE WITH YOU?
SHE'S A WILD ONE, EH?

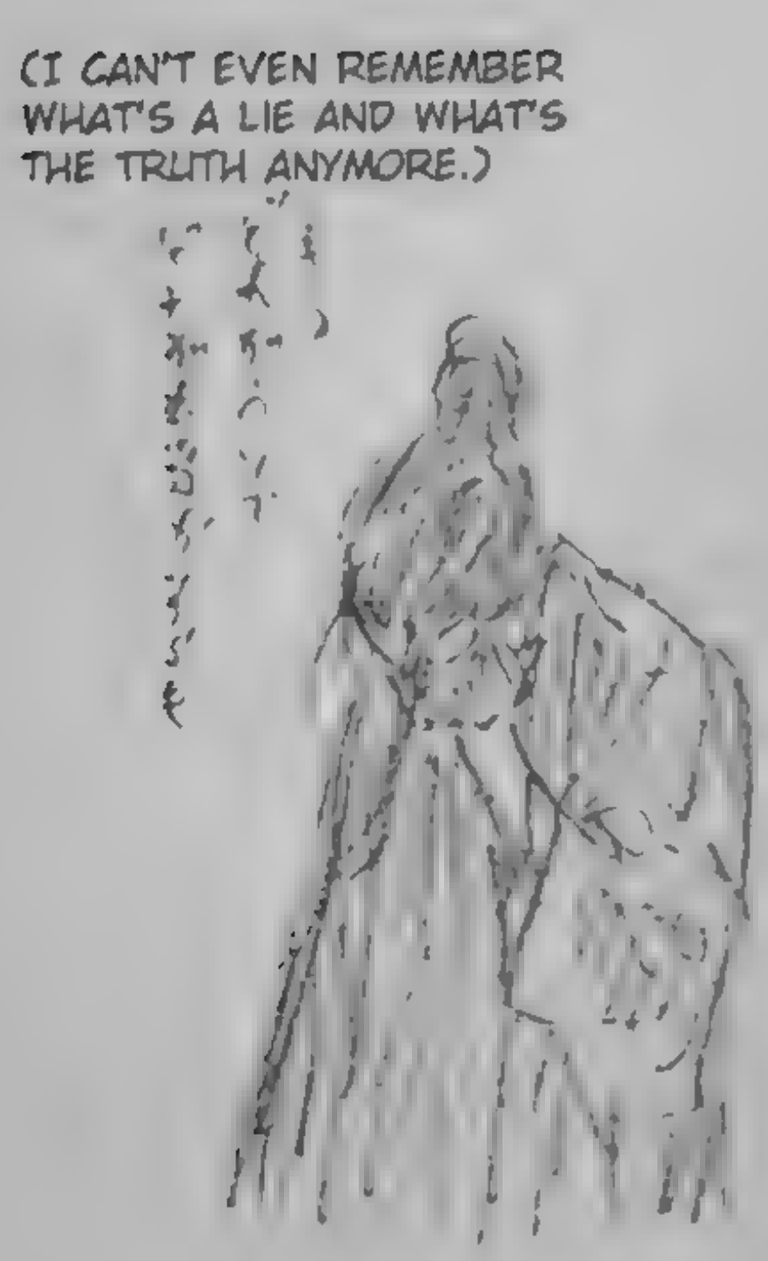
DON'T YOU LOVE THE WAY SHE MOANS?

PLIP

FSSHH

I JUST...
I JUST LOST A FRIEND...

Vagabond

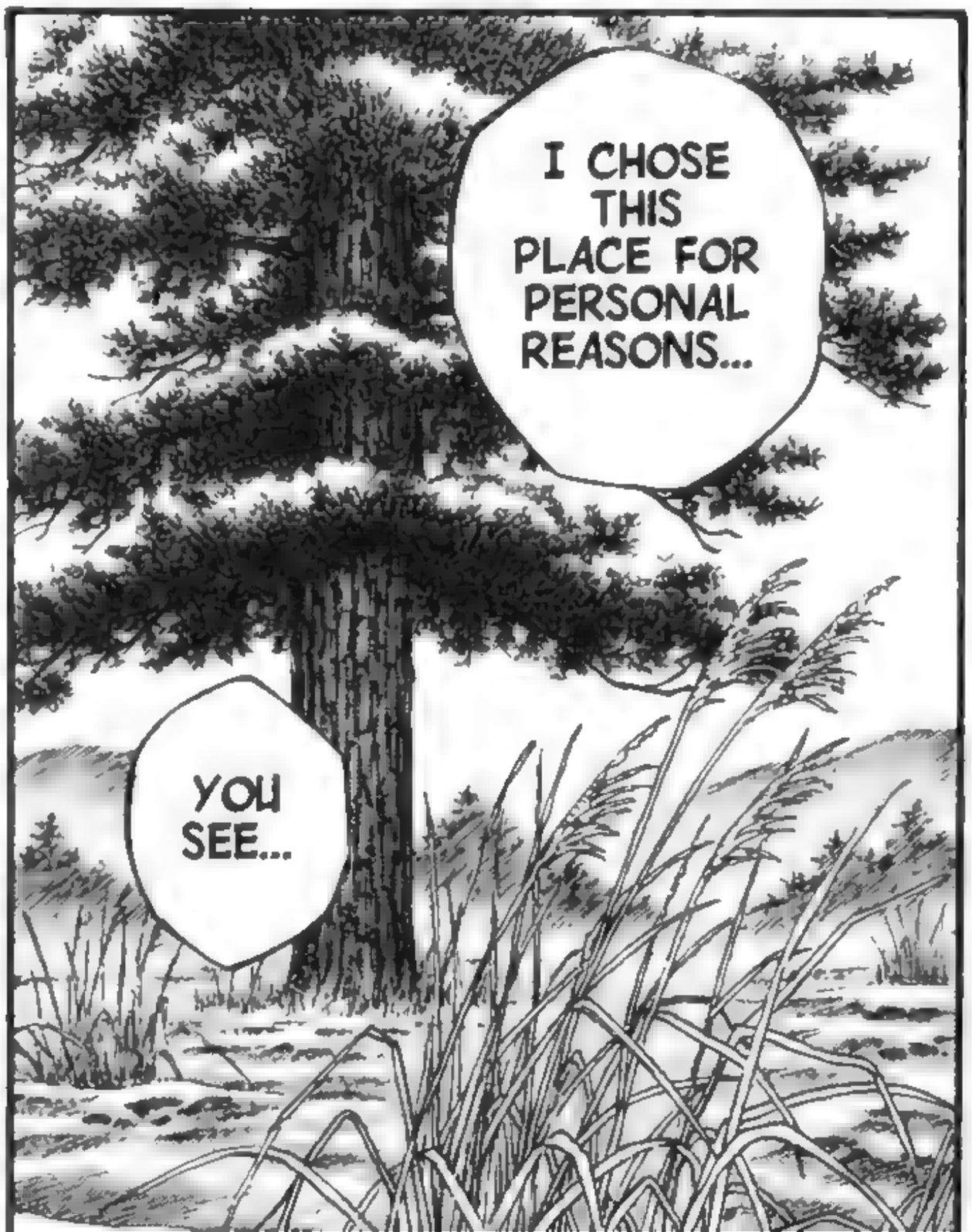

(I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT'S A LIE AND WHAT'S THE TRUTH ANYMORE.)

#223 From the Treetop

KRAAK

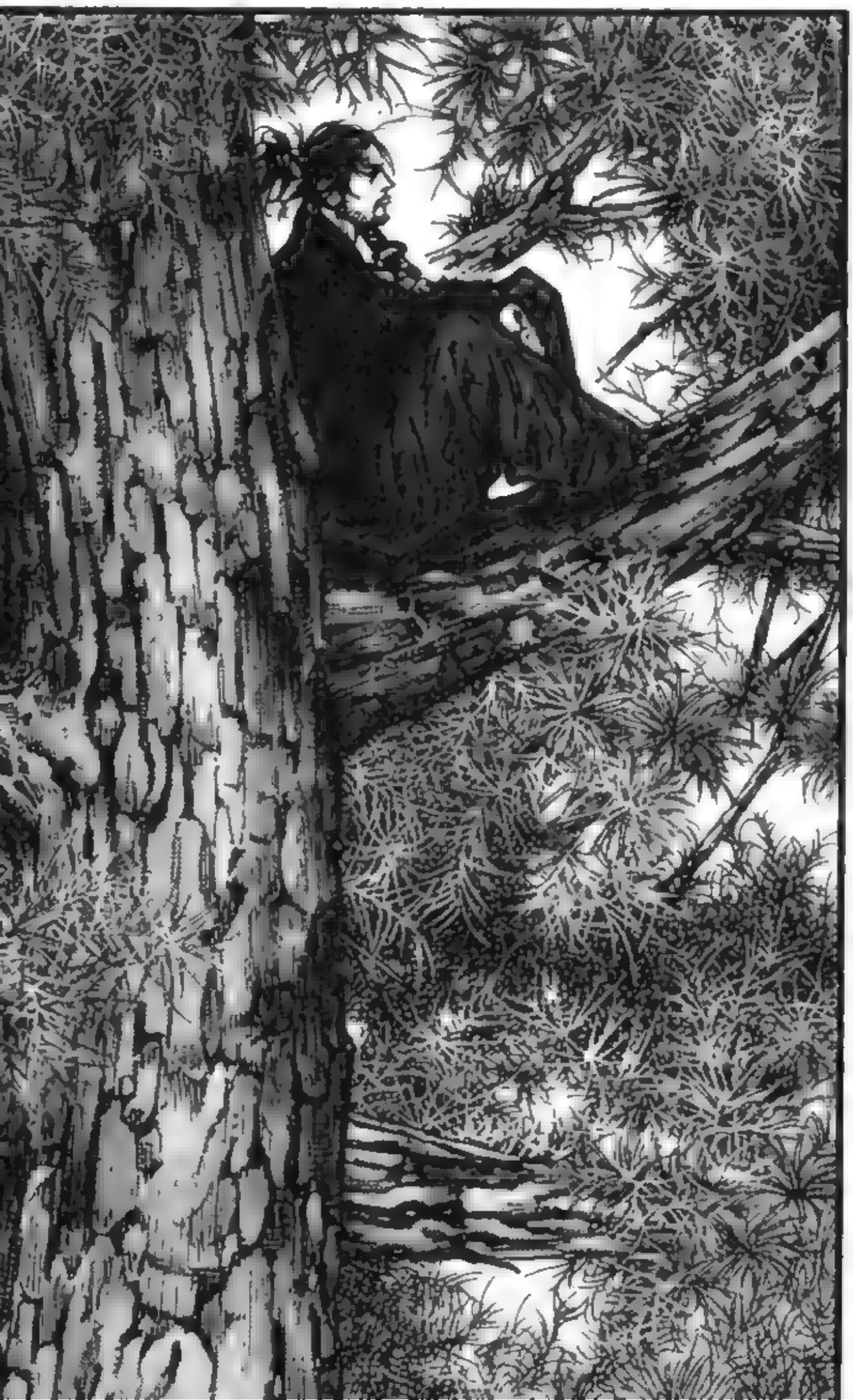
PERHAPS HE WAS KILLED BY KEMPŌ SENSEI.
HA HA
SO THIS WAS A BATTLE-FIELD...
DON'T PICK IT UP!

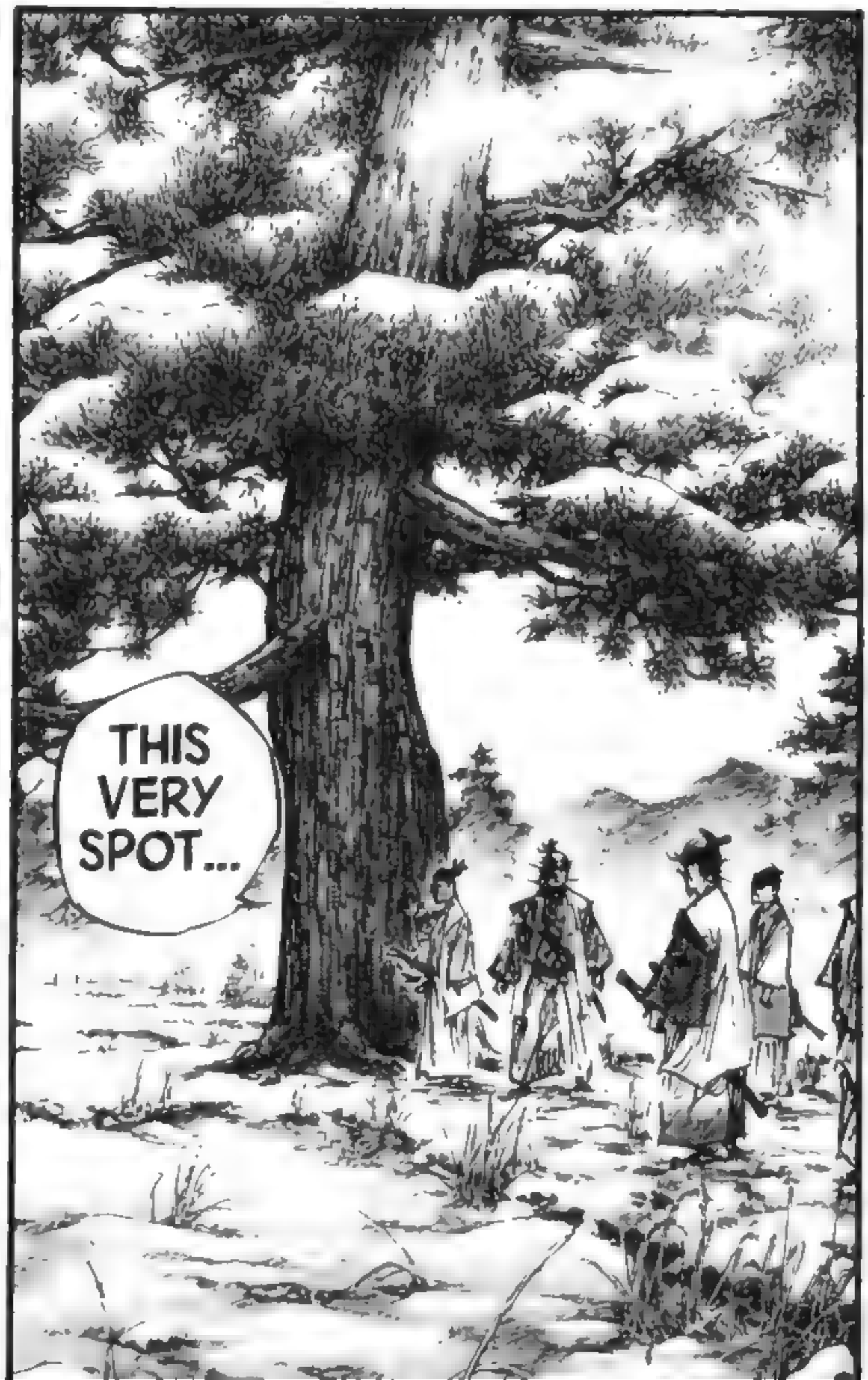
HUH!?
A SKULL!
ULP!


I CHOSE THIS PLACE FOR PERSONAL REASONS...
YOU SEE...

WHAT?
MASTER KEMPŌ?

THIS WAS WHERE I FIRST MET KEMPŌ SENSEI.

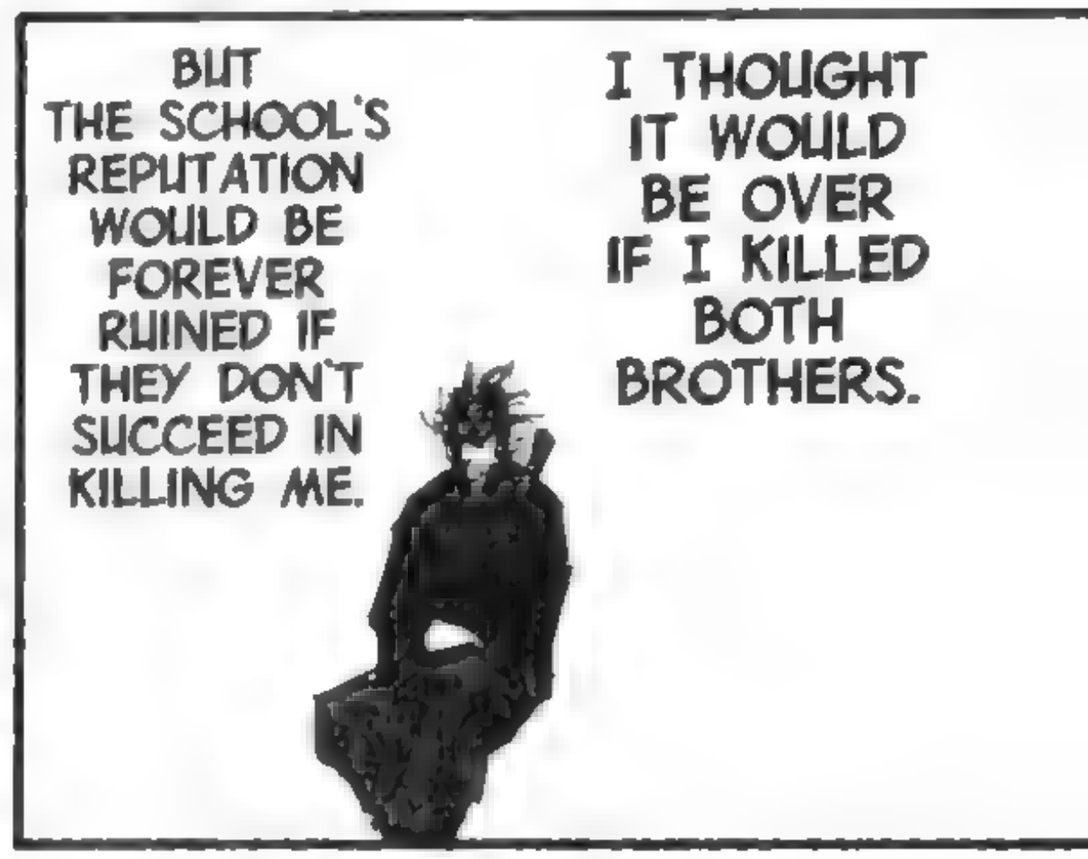




THE SPIRAL OF KILLING CAN'T GET ANY WORSE.

SEVENTY OF THEM...

THE ENTIRE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL IS GOING TO AMBUSH ME...



PUT MY CORPSE ON DISPLAY AT SANJŌ BRIDGE...?

HEE

HEE HEE!

GRANNY HON'IDEN WOULD BE OVERJOYED.

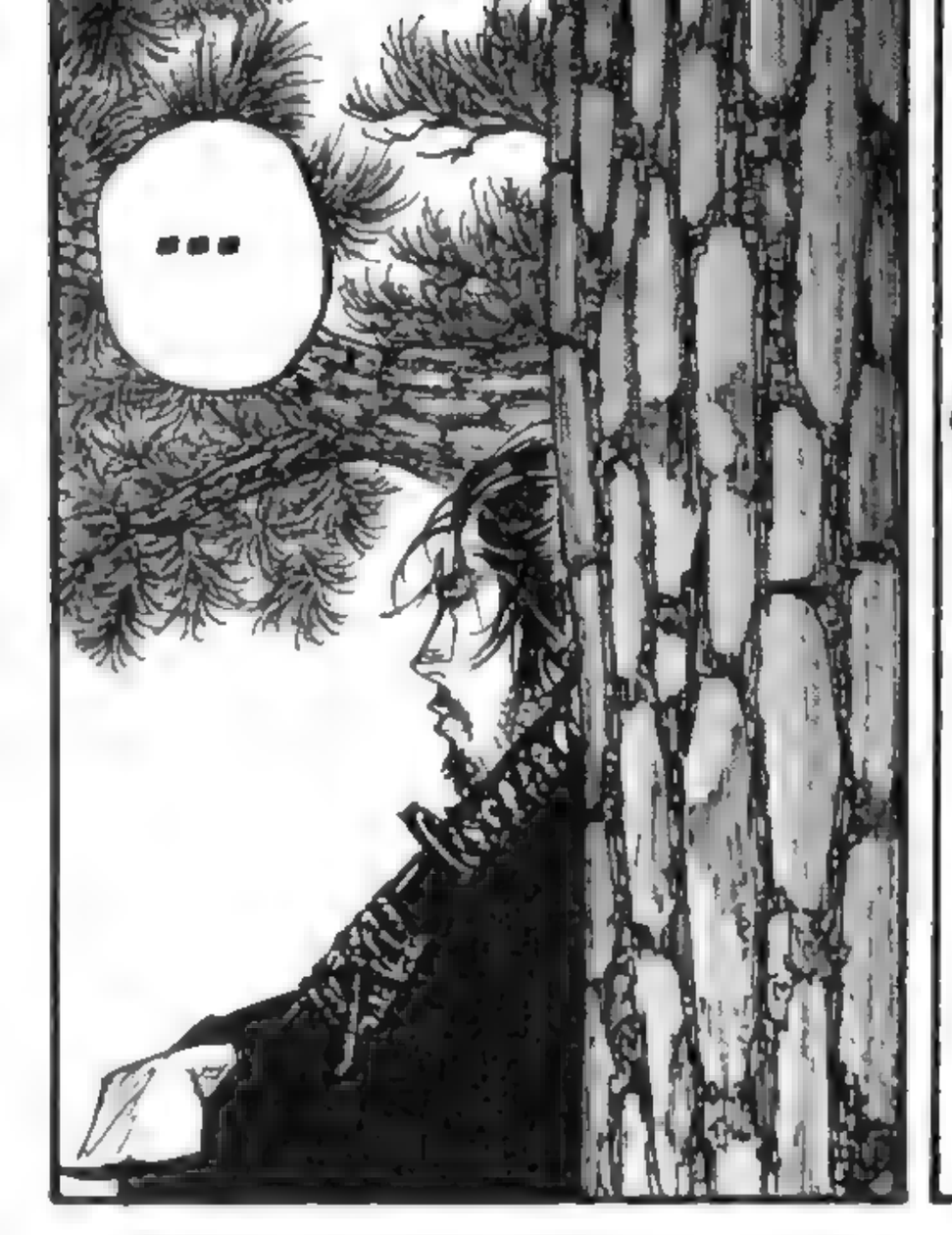
DEATH.

...

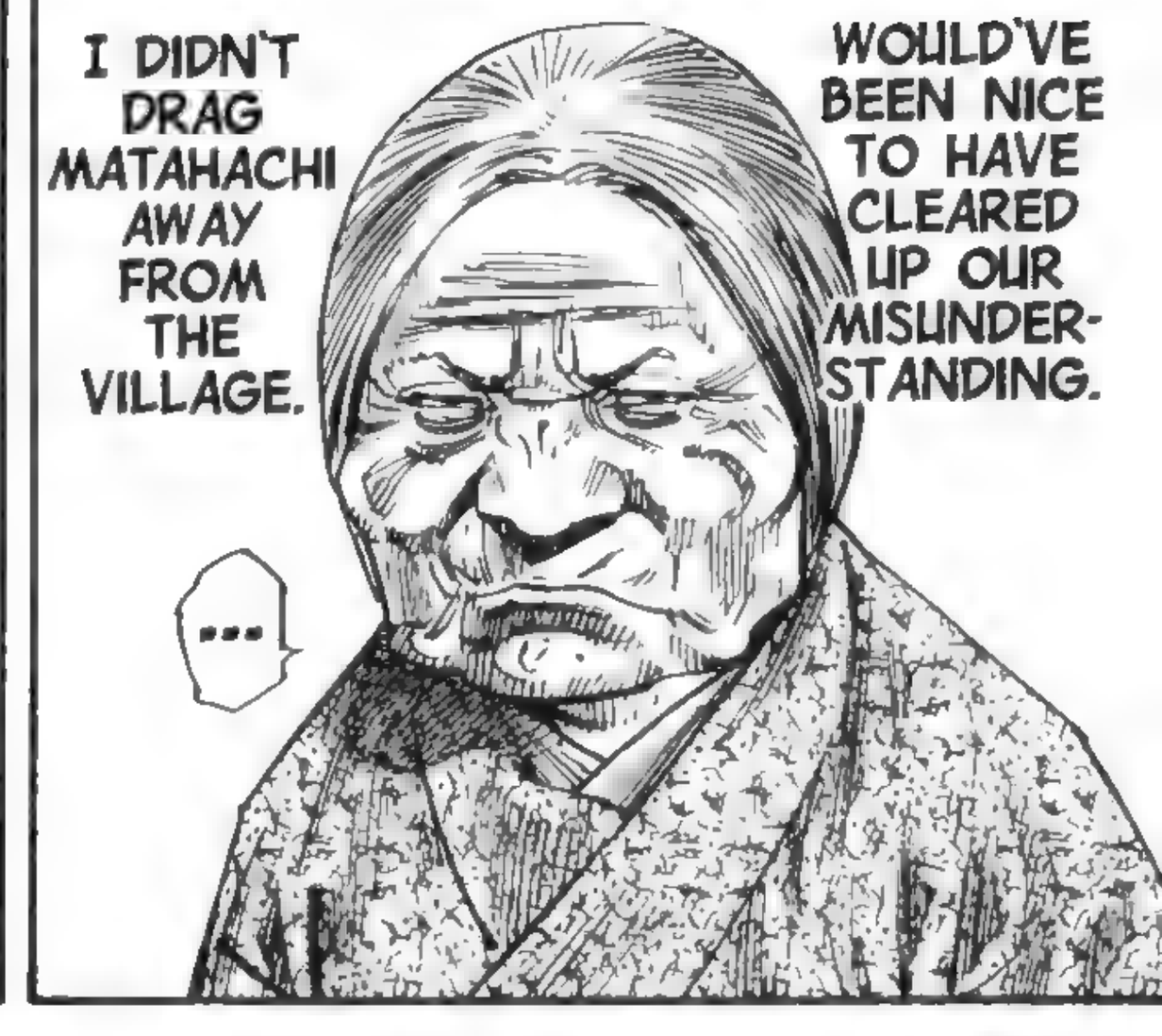
TEN TIMES OVER.

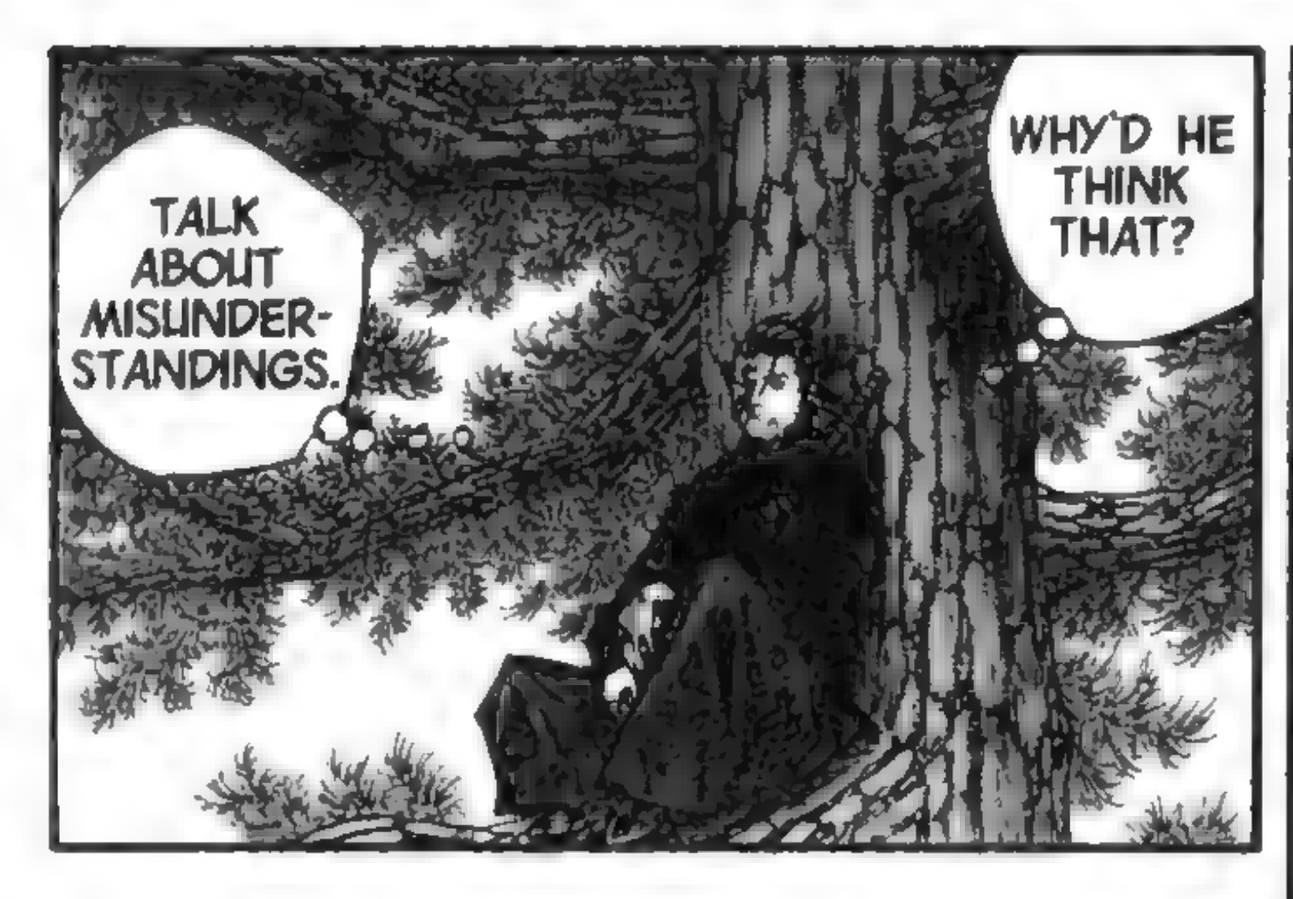
NO WAY I'LL SURVIVE.

DEATH...



HER HATRED IS COMPLETELY UNJUSTIFIED.





SHE'S A WILD ONE, EH?

HOW IS SHE WITH YOU?

YOU WERE LOOKING AT SOME VERSION OF ME THAT YOU CREATED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

MATA-HACHI ...

YOU WEREN'T LOOKING AT THE REAL ME LAST NIGHT.

IT AFFECTS THE WAY YOU ACT...

THE STORY THAT YOU CREATED...

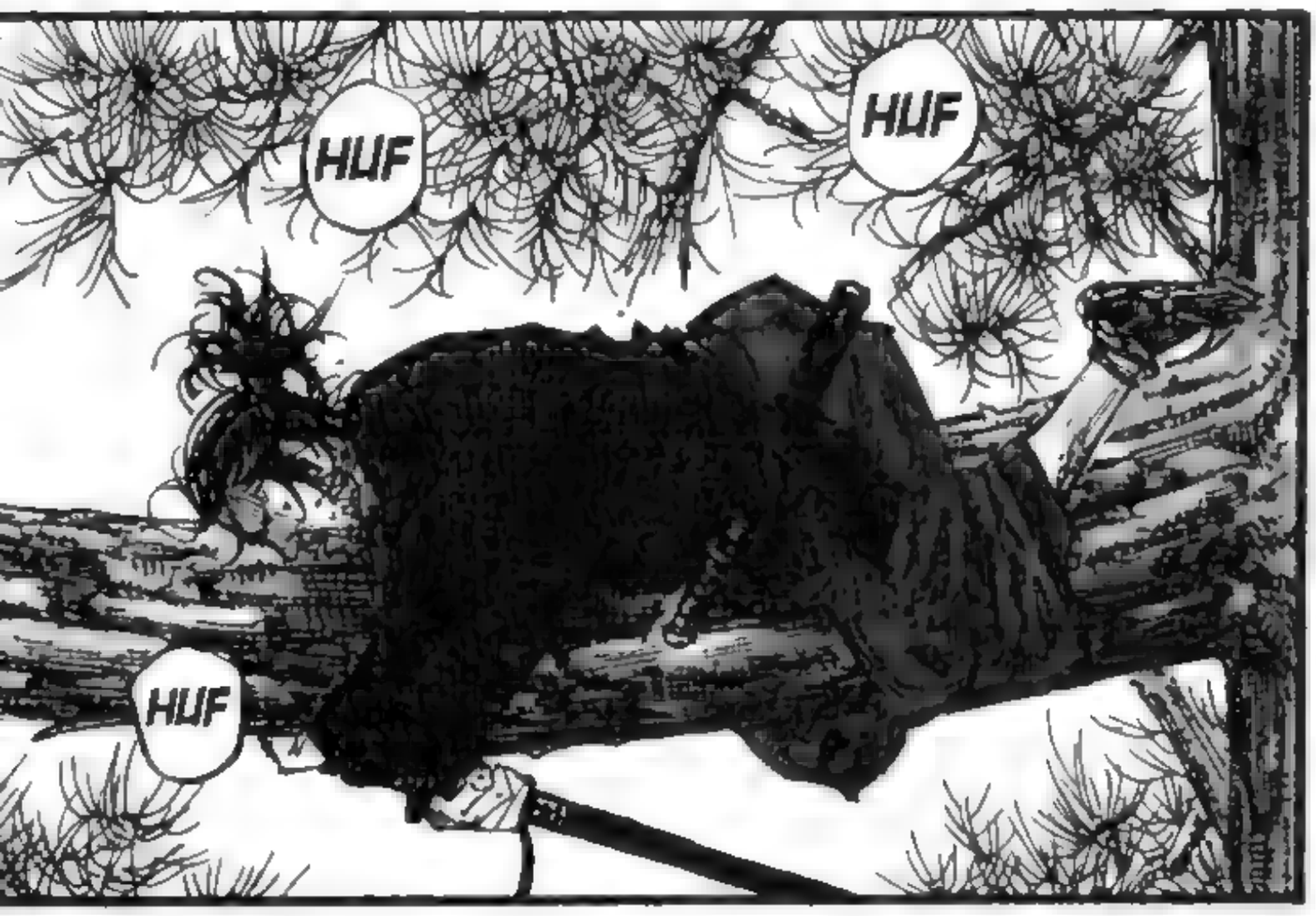
THAT VERSION OF ME INSIDE YOUR HEAD...

IT'S REFLECTED IN THE PERSON YOU'VE BECOME.

...

SLIP

.....


HUF
HUF
HUF

...
GRAB

HOW DID I APPEAR TO YOU?

FOR ME...

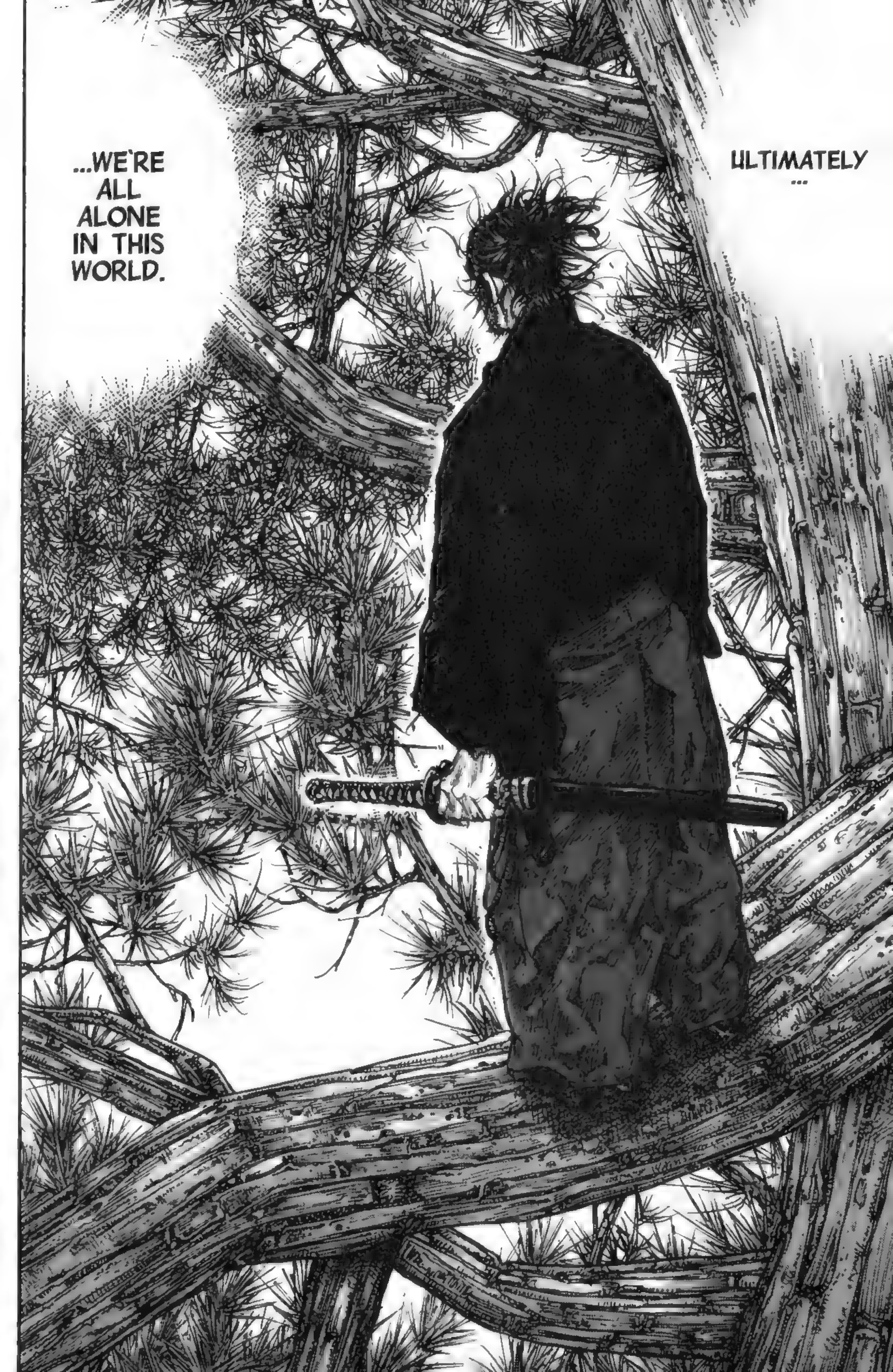
OTSU...

I WAS ASTONISHED.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.

YOU'RE ALWAYS WITH ME.

OTSŪ...

BUT THAT MUST ALSO BE SOME VERSION OF YOU THAT I MADE UP INSIDE MY HEAD.


...WE'RE ALL ALONE IN THIS WORLD.
ULTIMATELY ...

HOOF
MATA-HACHI, YOU FOOL.

I SHOULD'VE HIT YOU HARDER.

TMP

FICCH

ZNG
HM?
HMPH.

HUSAM!
IBN!

YOICHI!

YOICHI, STOP!

UNGH

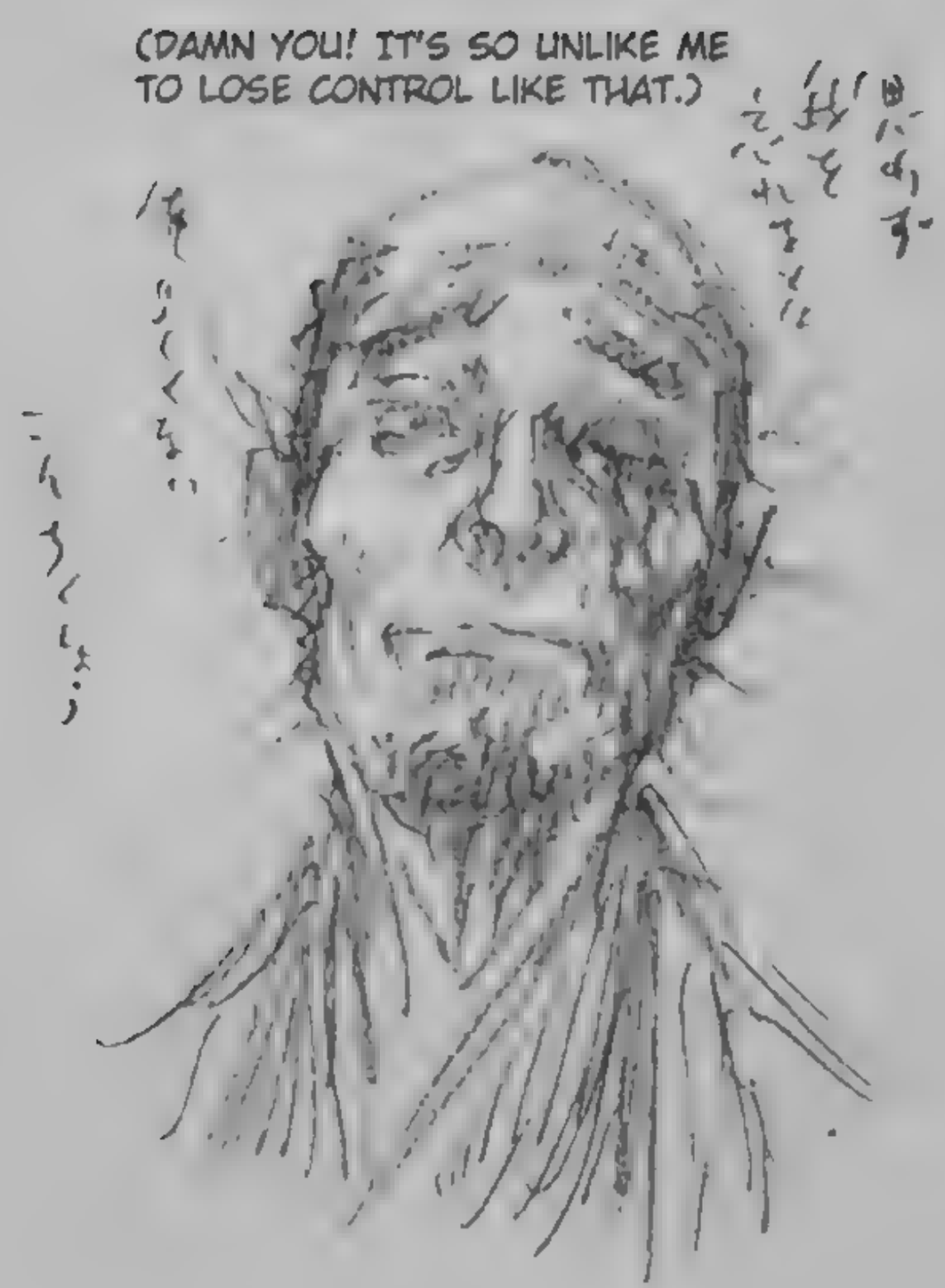
!!

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN TAKE ALL OF US ON?

BETTER THAN TAKING ON 70 OF YOU.

HMPH!

Vagabond


(DAMN YOU! IT'S SO UNLIKE ME
TO LOSE CONTROL LIKE THAT.)

#224 | Ichijōji Sagarimatsu

IT'S BETTER THAN TAKING ON 70 OF YOU.

BESIDES...

...ALL OF YOUR BEST MEN SEEM TO BE HERE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, UEDA?

...

THE BATTLE IS TOMOR-ROW.
THAT'S THE PLAN.

WE'LL RETREAT, OF COURSE.
?!

SCRATCH
SCRATCH

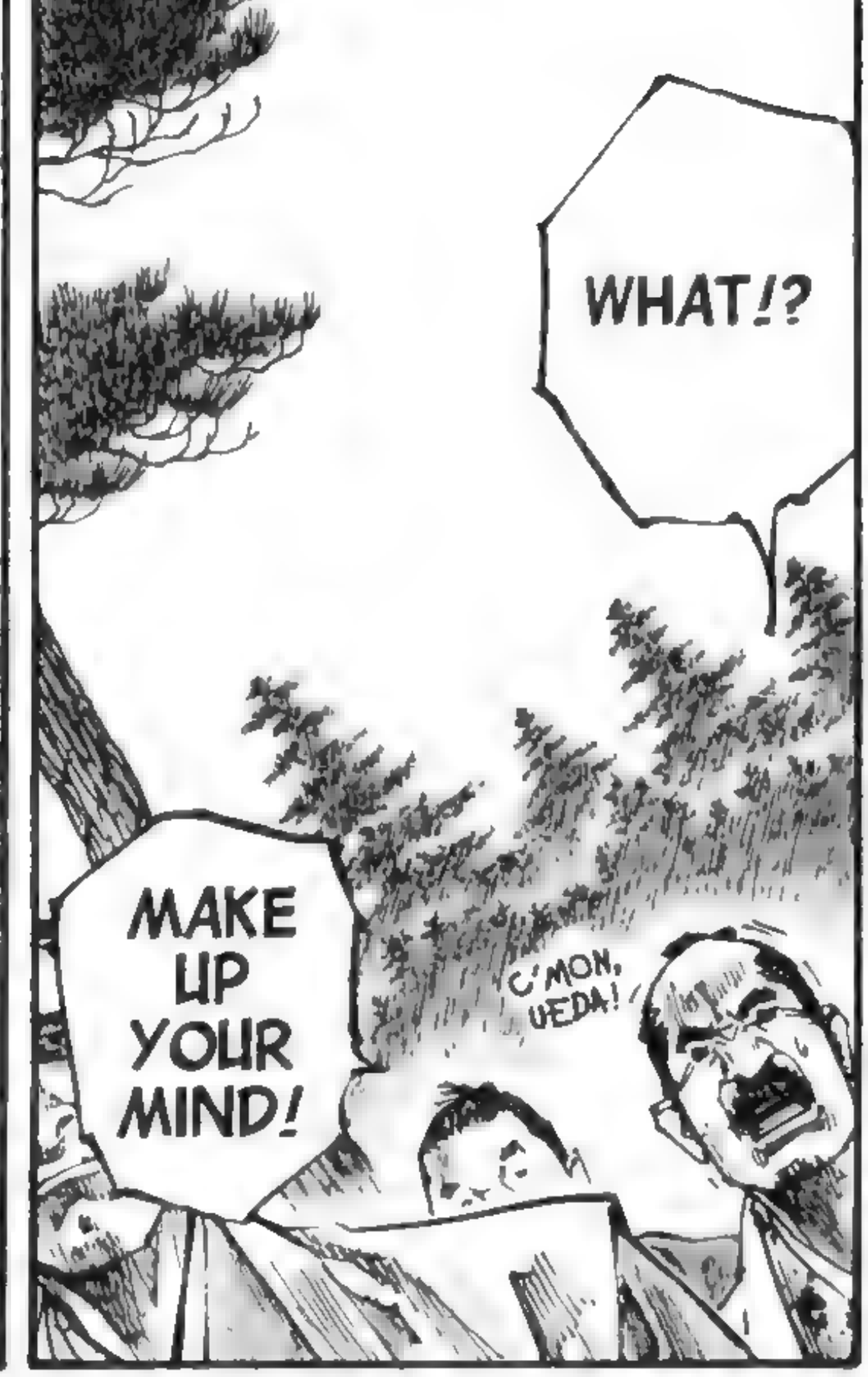
YAWN

VERY WELL...
SHUF

ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT ME NOW OR NOT!?

FICH
WE'LL FIGHT YOU HERE.
DRAW YOUR SWORD, MUSASHI.

TELL ME, MUSASHI ...
WHAT HAPPENED TO DISTURB YOU SO...?


WHAT!?
MAKE UP YOUR MIND!
C'MON, UEDA!

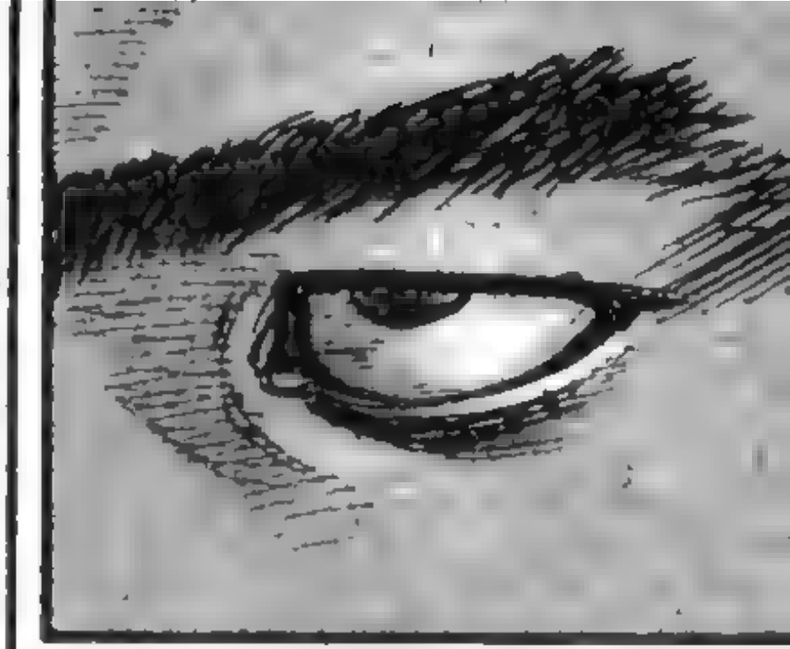
HUH?
...BUT YOUR BREATHING'S QUITE UNSTEADY RIGHT NOW.
YOU CAN CUT A MAN DOWN WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT...

!
HYUU

THIS MUST BE THE SPREADING PINE AT ICHIJŌJI!

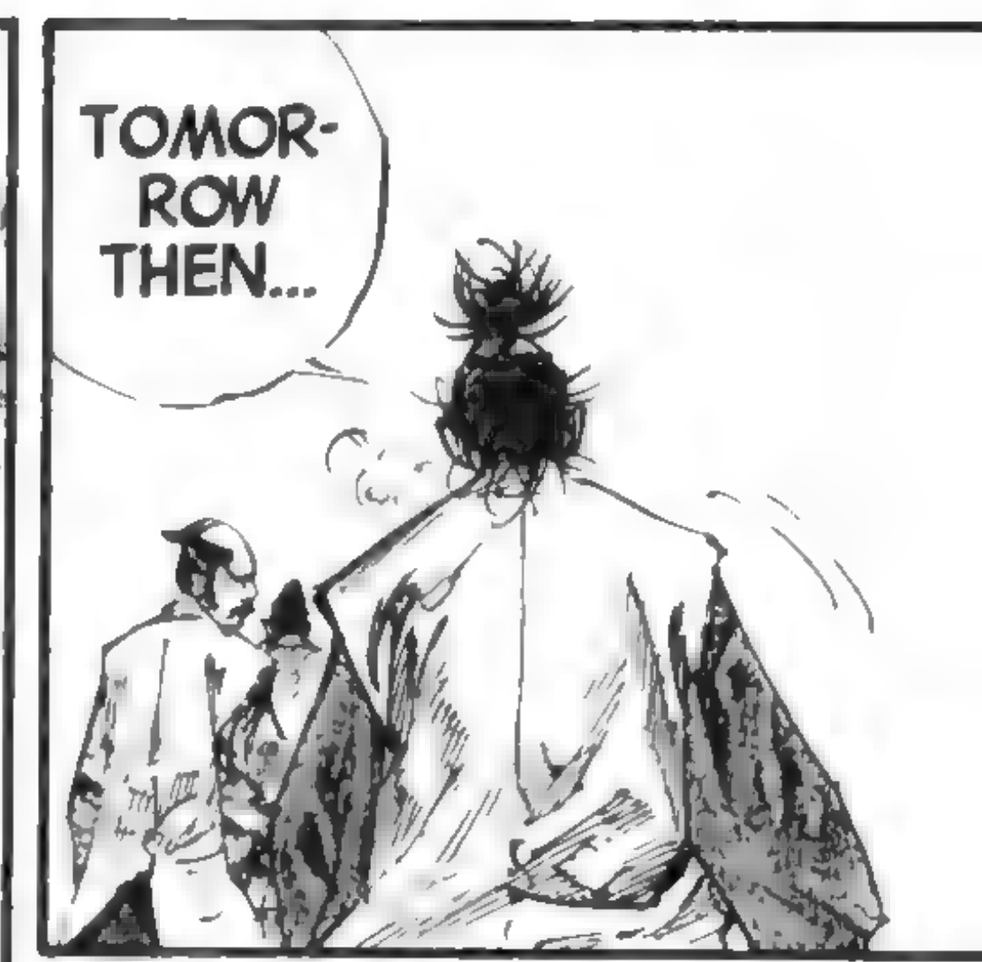
I WAS TOLD TO LOOK FOR THIS TREE TO FIND KONPUKUJI TEMPLE...
HM?
OH...MY APOLOGIES IF I'VE INTER-RUPTED SOMETHING HERE.

CHK



...

FICH
FICH
...
FICH


TOMOR-
ROW
THEN...

A
MISSED
OPPOR-
TUNITY.

...

WE FIGHT TOMORROW.

MUSTN'T DWELL ON THIS.

PERHAPS I OVER-STEPPED MY BOUNDS...

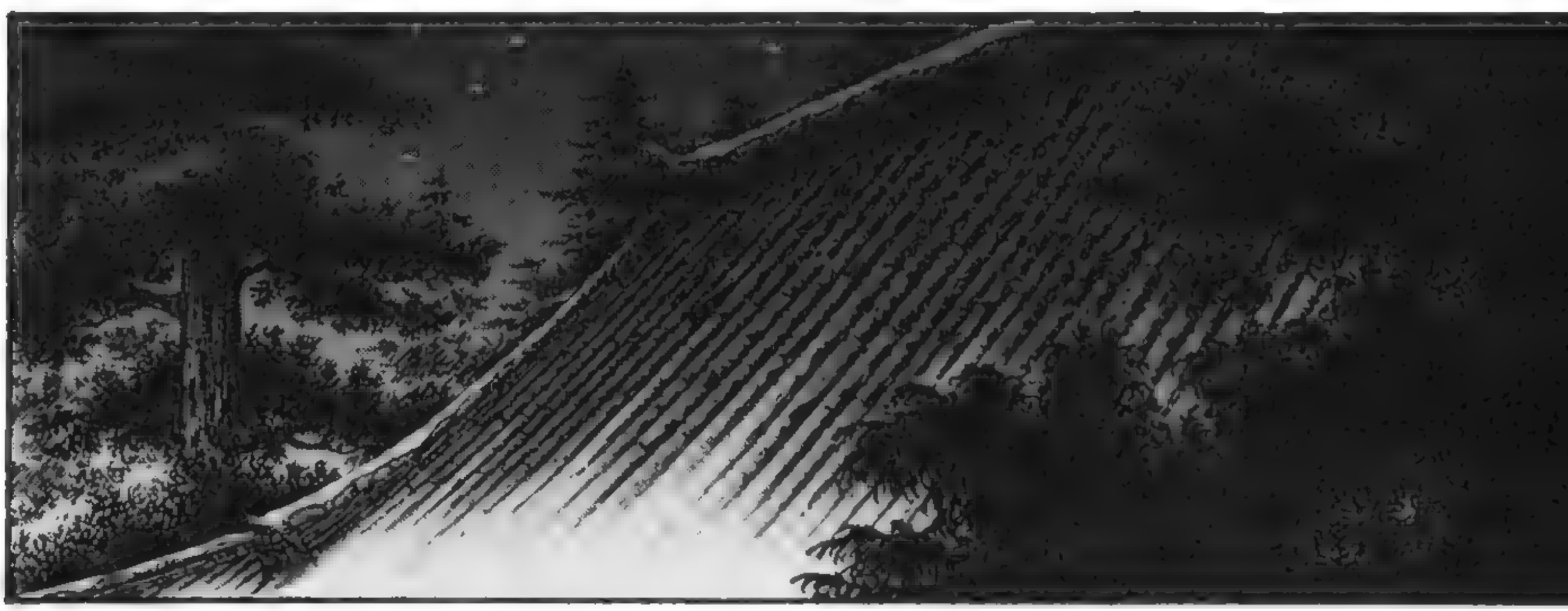
YOU'RE A DIFFERENT MAN NOW.

HM!?
YOU'RE BLEEDING...

I BARELY RECOG-NIZED YOU.
BUT TODAY, YOU HAVE A BIT OF THE OLD TAKEZŌ LEFT IN YOU.

HE'S FORMID-ABLE...
YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT HIM TOO?

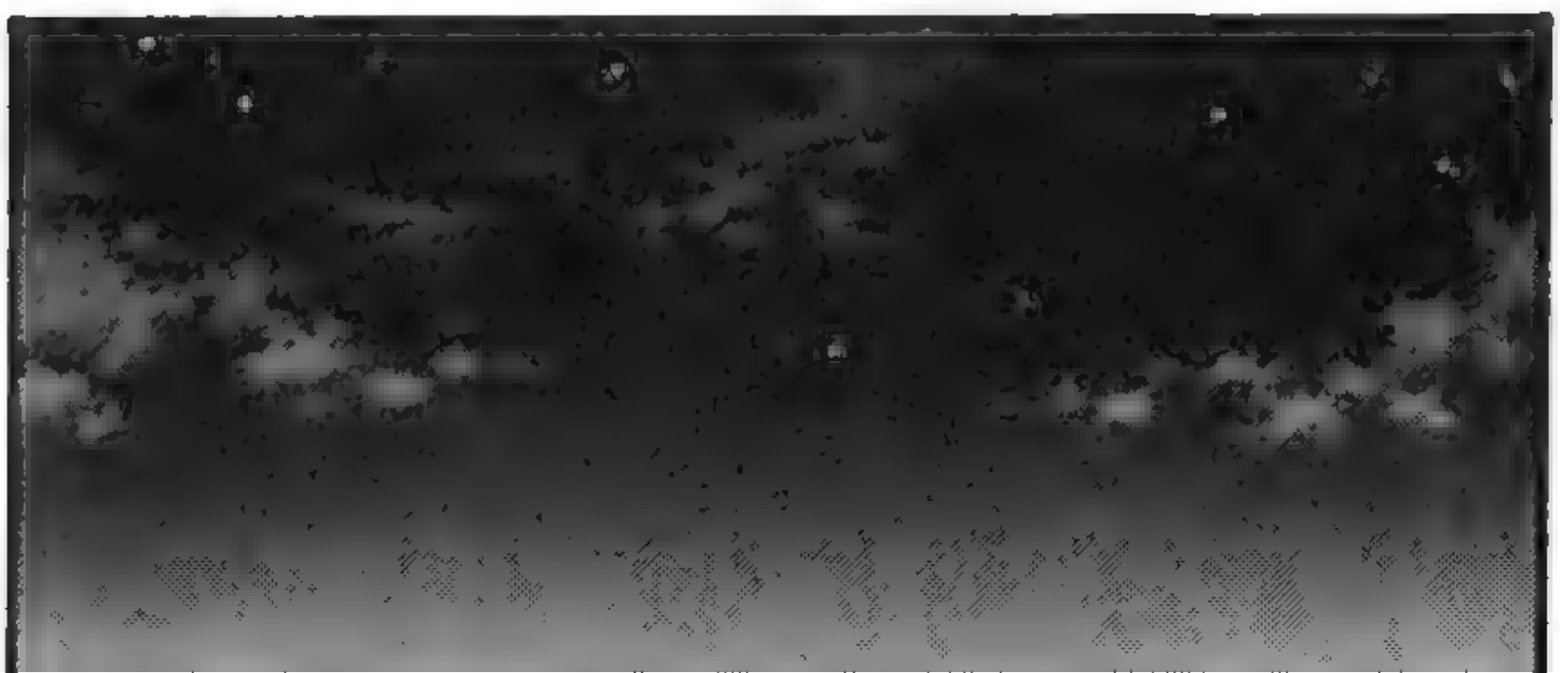
.....



SNIP

SSIP
DELI-CIOUS!

A TOAST TO OUR REUNION.
A MONK WHO DRINKS.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.
C'MON, JUST A FEW SIPS.



WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD SHOW UP TO TAKE ON 70 SAMURAI?

I'M NOT GOING.

I'M LEAVING KYOTO.

SO TOMORROW WILL BE YOUR FINAL BATTLE AGAINST THE YOSHIOKA.

.....

I DON'T CARE WHAT PEOPLE THINK.

SO WHAT...

...FOR RUNNING AWAY.

YOU'LL BE CALLED A COWARD...

(MUSASHI RAN AWAY!)

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TAKUAN.

HMM...

I SEE...

I'LL HEAD OUT WELL BEFORE DAWN.

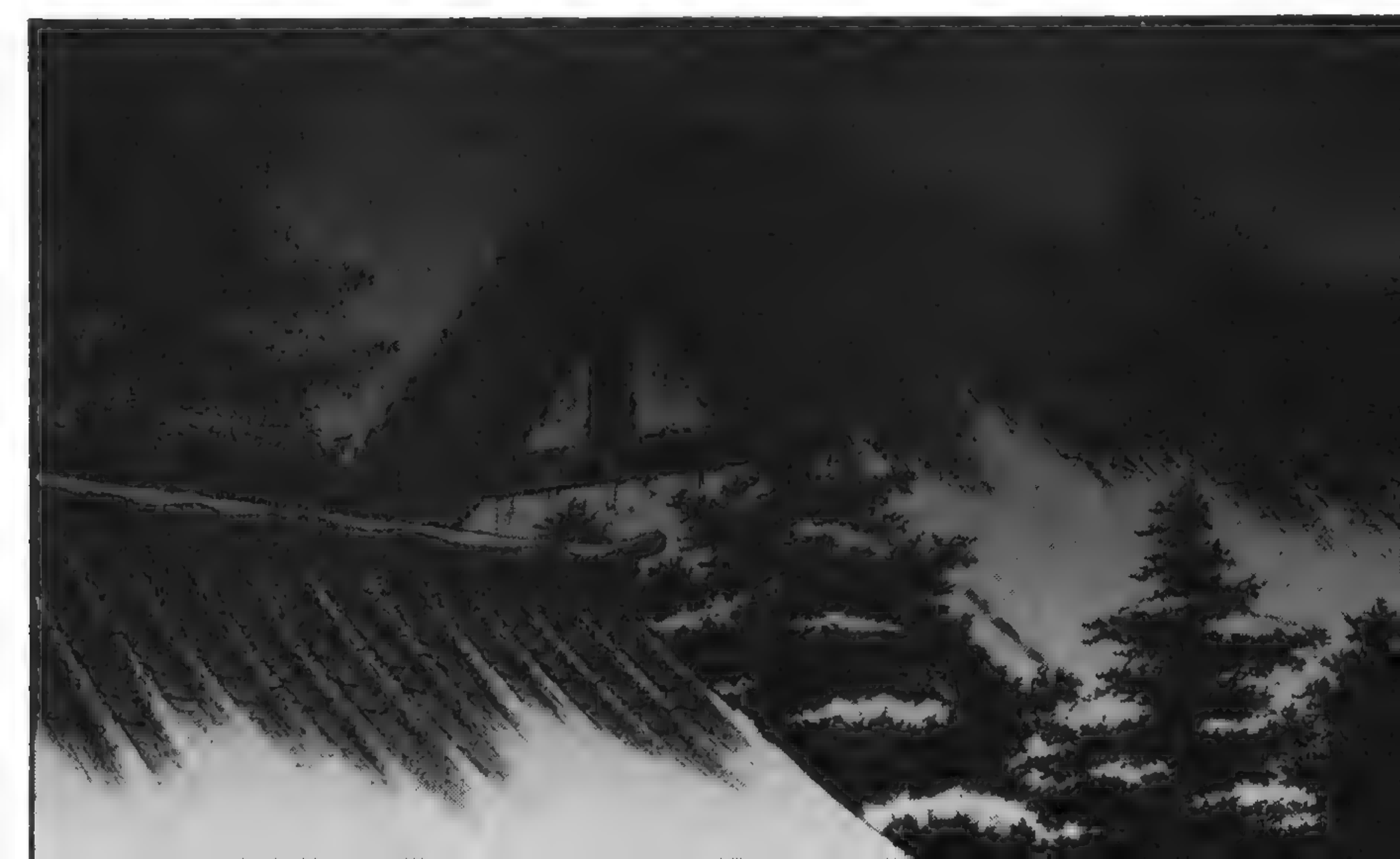
SO FARE-WELL...

THAT MEANS YOU'RE STRONGER.
...YOU'VE BECOME KIND.
MUSASHI ...
THE STRONG ARE ALWAYS KIND.
MAY WE MEET AGAIN...
YOU AND I ARE BOTH WANDERING TRAVEL-ERS...

THE STRONG ARE ALWAYS KIND, EH...?

.....

TOMORROW I MUST TRAVEL BEYOND THAT MOUNTAIN.
I SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP.



FICH

BRR...

FICH
FICH
FICH

THAT'S THE PATH OVER THE MOUNTAIN.
FICH
LET'S SEE.
OKAY...

...
FICH

.....
KAWW
SEVENTY SAMURAI!
FICH
OH, COME ON!
SINGLE-HANDED !?
FICH
I MUST BE AN IDIOT!
FICH

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Critically acclaimed, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts Award for manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka Award for best manga, and in 2003, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. While *VAGABOND* continues its epic run in Japan, Inoue is simultaneously pushing the bounds of manga narrative with *REAL*—a heavy-hitting manga about wheelchair basketball. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords simultaneously—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this manga are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

A Brief Historical Overview
The *Sengoku* (warring states) period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weak and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating a federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its 5-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years. The political stability that resulted put mass numbers of samurai out of work. Masterless samurai, known as *ronin*, were forced to wander the land to seek out employment. This, the beginning of the Edo Period (1600-1868), set the stage for many of the period dramas and *chambara* sword-fighting films that have popularized the image of the samurai to a Western audience.

Hon'ami Koetsu (1558-1637)
Famed artist and calligrapher who co-founded an influential arts movement called the Rinpa School. Koetsu was involved in numerous fields including tea ceremony, pottery, and calligraphy. In addition, Koetsu succeeded the line of his family's ancestral business of sword polishing and appraisals.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple, which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Rengeoin
Located in eastern Kyoto, Rengeoin Temple is more commonly referred to as Sanjusangendo. The main hall of Rengeoin features an amazing display of 1001 Kannon Buddhist statues.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi, Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND,* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons, who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

Winner of the 2000 Media Arts Festival Award
Recipient of the 2000 Kodansha Award for Best Manga
Winner of the 2002 Tezuka Osamu Cultural Award
Nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for Best Writer/Artist

"...reads like an Akira Kurosawa film captured on the printed page."
—Cliff Biggers, *Comics Buyer's Guide*

"...an extremely satisfying comics experience."
—Tony Isabella, *Comics Buyer's Guide*

"This really is one of the best comics currently being produced."
—Greg McElhatton, icomics.com

Striving for enlightenment by way of the sword, Miyamoto Musashi is prepared to cut down anyone who stands in his way. ***Vagabond*** depicts the life and times of the most celebrated samurai of all time!

At last, the long-awaited rematch between Musashi and the leader of the mighty Yoshioka School is at hand. Literally head and shoulders above Musashi, Yoshioka Denshichiro granted Musashi a reprieve of one year for a rematch. Now the time is up, and the climax to Musashi's epic clash with the Yoshioka is about to come to a bloody finale—or will it? Within one year's time, Musashi has grown wiser and stronger, but can he really bring this spiral of blood and killing to an end?

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This book reads from right to left.